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STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES

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THE DEAD

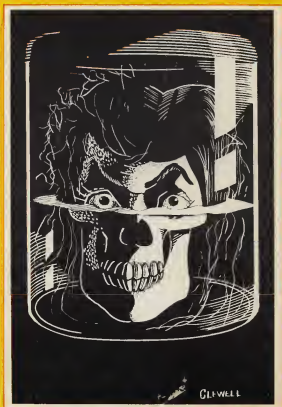
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THE
MONKEY'S
PAW

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Doctor Satan in
HORROR
INSURED

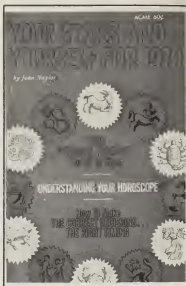
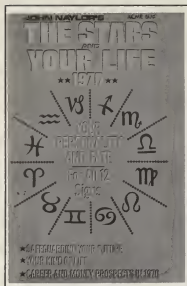
by PAUL ERNST



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STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES

Volume 3

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Robert A. W. Lowndes, *Editor*

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The Editor's Page

The famous story of a dinner conversation at the home of Percy Bysshe Shelley, involving Lord Byron, Dr. John William Polidori, and the Shelleys, wherein someone remarked upon the difficulty of writing horror stories, and Mrs. Shelley replied that she would do one on a bet, may possibly be legend; at any rate it is enshrined in literary history, and we do know that there was a contest which resulted in *Frankenstein*, by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley and *The Vampire*, by Dr. Polidori. But that a chance remark resulted in the start of one of the most fabulous series of detective stories ever launched is not legend. It happened around 1915, and the subject to whom it was addressed is still with us as this is being written in August, 1969: Agatha Miller Christie's sister said to her, "I bet you can't write a good detective story."

You'll find the account in G. C. Ramsey's book, *Agatha Christie, Mistress of Mystery*, Dodd, Mead & Company, 1967; \$4.00; and while critical complaints of inadequacy in various directions seem justified to me, the book is still worth obtaining, if you are interested in reading about the acknowledged Queen of Detective Story Writers of the twentieth century, and thoughtful comment about the detective story as literature.

She was born in 1890, not 1891 as has been erroneously recorded in many places, so she'll be 79 this year; and while her first marriage (to Mr. Christie) did not work out, she has retained the

name she used on her first book, even though she has been Agatha Mallowan for most of her career. Her second husband is a noted archaeologist, with whom she took many exploratory trips abroad, there gathering much of the authentic background material for some of her novels.

She worked in a Dispensary during the Great War, so her knowledge of poisons and their antidotes is sure and solid; it is only natural, then, that the first novel she wrote, in response to her sister's wager, would be closely related to the war and the specialized knowledge she had. Nor was this her first attempt at writing. Ramsey quotes her concerning her previous attempts at fiction, which were tales "of unrelieved gloom, in which most of the characters died".

She had been an ardent admirer of Sherlock Holmes, accounts of whose exploits were still being written by Dr. Watson at this time. I do not know whether anyone actually suggested that she might have been influenced by Robert Barr's collection of short stories, *The Triumphs of Eugene Valmont*, which appeared in 1906, nor can I give any opinion of my own on the matter as I have never read them; she herself says that she had read Barr but did not find Valmont impressive, while she cheerfully acknowledges her debt to Sherlock Holmes, having a great fondness for the combination of eccentric detective, whose Boswell is a "...respectable, nice, but idiotic friend." Sherlockians in general possibly may join me in protest

against such an extreme view of the good John H. Watson, M.D., but apparently this was the way Agatha Christie saw him; and the "friend" she chooses to relate the case of *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (written in 1915, finally published in 1920) may still hold precedence as the most sublimely idiotic "Watson" in detective literature.

It is 1915; Captain Arthur Hastings, invalidated home from the Front, encounters an old friend, John Cavendish, who invites him to Styles, his mother's estate in Essex. Mrs. Cavendish, now in her seventies, has nonetheless married again, and her new husband, Dr. John Inglethorp is not exactly popular with the family. In fact, somewhat mysterious happenings seem to be piled on to the general air of unrest at Styles.

Near the estate is a little village, presently occupied by Belgian refugees; Hastings stops at the Post Office there to pick up some stamps. On his way out, he bumps into a little man who is just entering; he steps aside and apologizes; the little man utters a loud exclamation and embraces him, calling him "*Mon ami, Hastings!*" And Captain Hastings then recognizes Hercule Poirot.

It is possible, despite the fact that she was not impressed by the Barr stories, that here Agatha Christie found the suggestion of making her leading character a retired detective and an eccentric foreigner. Poirot, now a refugee, has been one of the most celebrated members of the Belgian police, and his fame for having solved numerous baffling cases is widespread.

His physical eccentricities are his size — five-foot four; his exactly egg-shaped head which he characteristically perches a little to one side; his military bearing; his large moustaches; and his almost compulsive neatness. One of his most important character eccentricities, however, is a calculated one — particularly in the early novels,

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BLOOD THIRST
*a Tale Fantastic, but
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on Page 125

although he does not hesitate to assume it later on when it will be of value to him. He acts like a foreigner, and uses amusingly peculiar English very deliberately, since this will lead most Britishers to dismiss him as unimportant (really, now, can't speak the language you know, vastly over-rated and all that) and thus to relax and say things in his presence that they would not say if they respected his prowess.

There is a warmth about him which anyone who does not feel superior to him, or for good reason feel uneasy in his presence, responds to; and M. Poirot does have a flair for enlisting the sympathies of the people he meets in the course of his investigations and obtaining their cooperation. I do not believe we are ever told how he and Hastings first met, or what experiences they shared which laid the foundation for this chance meeting being a happy resumption of their friendship; but it isn't really important.

Six publishers rejected *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, Ramsey tells us, and the seventh, "... John Lane of the Bodley Head in London decided to take a gamble and publish it." Mr. Lane deserves a place in detective story history, and in the hearts of those who love the literature, second only to Mrs. G. T. Bettany, who read the manuscript of *A Study in Scarlet* in October 1886 and said to her husband (who had turned it over to her to read and evaluate), "This man is a born novelist. It will be a great success." Apparently no one made so encouraging a prophecy to Mr. Lane, but it is heartwarming to learn that virtue pays off at times, and Lane's gamble hit something of a jackpot.

Like Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot is an egotist of the highest rank, and has a solid foundation of experience and specialized knowledge from which to work when he is called into the Styles Affair. Unlike the situation of Holmes,

when Watson joins him on their first case together (*A Study in Scarlet*, of course), Poirot has standing with the police of several nations; and should rather be compared with Holmes as this illustrious predecessor was around, say, 1886. Holmes, of course, was never a police detective; Poirot, however, has retired and is perfectly free to accept a case or not as he chooses.

Agatha Christie has always shown a keen sense of humor in her stories; in later novels, she takes delight in burlesquing both the more slovenly examples of the literature and herself together in a subsidiary character, Mrs. Ariadne Oliver. Ariadne is a writer of an immensely popular series of novels around an excessively improbable Finnish detective; and the fact that her tales are full of inconsistencies, etc., has not hurt their sales in the least. In fact, she says, the one time she really worked hard at authenticity, her readers complained most bitterly. She assists (if that is the right word) Poirot in *Cards at the Table*, *Dead Man's Folly*, *Mrs. McGinty's Dead*, and *The Third Girl*. Christie's description of Ariadne Oliver and her working habits is largely self-caricature, and the encounters with Poirot are invariably amusing. La Oliver is sure that crime would be reduced at least 50% were a woman to be head of Scotland Yard and finds Poirot's reliance upon reason and logic most tiresome; intuition is the key, she claims. Add to this her lack of interest in neatness or proper dress for a woman of her build and complexion, one can see why she gives poor Hercule the horrors.

Not that Poirot absolutely spurns intuition; he simply will not rest anything like final conclusions upon it, but as a suggestion of where it might be profitable to look for evidence, he does not despise it at all. His methods are like

(Turn to Page 121)

WEIRD TERROR TALES

*Presents For Winter
(Issue No. 1)*

THE DEAD-ALIVE
*by Nat Schachner &
Arthur L. Zagat*

•

**THE HOUSE AND
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*a classic tale of terror
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Back Cover.

Horror Insured

by Paul Ernst

(author of *The Consuming Flame*, *Hollywood Horror*, etc.)

IT WAS NOON. The enormous National State Building hummed like a beehive with the activity of its tenants. Every office spewed forth men and women on their way to lunch. The express elevators dropped like plummets from the seventy-ninth floor, while the locals handled the crowds from the fortieth floor down.

At the top floor an express elevator tarried beyond its usual schedule. The operator paid no attention to the red flash from the starter downstairs signaling the Up cages to start down as soon as possible. He acted as though he was beyond schedules, as indeed he was.

This elevator, though not entirely private, was at the disposal of Martial Varley, owner of the building, whose offices took up

“...If the premium is not paid, you will be subjected to a rather unpleasant feeling of horror concerning something that may happen to you If you do not choose to take out my horror insurance, you shall burn in slow fire until you are utterly consumed”

The eight stories that PAUL ERNST wrote about the duel between Doctor Satan and Ascott Keane ran in *WEIRD TALES* between the issues of August 1935 and August-September 1936. These are weird-mystery, rather than detective tales, because the identity of the sinister Doctor Satan is never really an issue at all. Whether Mr. Ernst originally intended to use the identity angle, then changed his mind, or Editor Farnsworth Wright misinterpreted the author's intent is beyond my knowledge. At any rate, the cover of the August 1935, depicting a scene from the first story in the series (*Doctor Satan*) bore the special blurb: Who Is Doctor Satan? As we discover in the process of following the tales, Ascott Keane apparently knows; but there's no point in mentioning a name which will mean nothing to the reader, since there are never any suspects among which the reader is expected to choose.

the top floor. Others could ride in it, but they did so with the understanding that at morning, noon and evening the elevator waited to carry Varley, whose appearances at his office occurred with time-clock regularity. Hence, if the cage waited inactively those in it knew why and did not exhibit signs of impatience.

There were half a dozen people in the elevator that paused for Varley to ride down. There was an elderly woman, Varley's office manager and two secretaries; and there were two big business men who had been conferring with Varley and were now waiting to go to lunch with him.

The six chatted in pairs to one another. The cage waited, with the operator humming a tune. Around them, in the big building, the prosaic business of prosaic people was being done. The glass-paneled doors to Varley's office opened. The operator snapped to attention and those in the cage stopped talking and stared respectfully at the man who came to the cage doors.

Varley was a man of sixty, gray-haired, with a coarse but kindly face dominated by a large nose which his enemies called bulbous. He wore the hat that had made him famous—a blue-gray fedora which he ordered in quantity lots and wore exclusive of all other colors, fabrics or fashions.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, Ed," Varley boomed to one of the two business men in the cage. "Phone call. Held me up for a few minutes."

He stepped into the elevator, nodding to the others. "Let's go," he said to the operator.

The cage started down.

The express elevators were supposed to fall like a plummet. They made the long drop to the ground in a matter of seconds, normally. And this one started like a plummet.

"Damn funny, that phone call I got just before I came out of my office," Varley boomed to the two men he was lunching with. "Some joker calling himself Doctor Satan—" He stopped, and frowned. "What's wrong with the elevator?" he snapped to the operator.

"I don't know, sir," the boy said.

He was jerking at the lever. Ordinarily, so automatic was the cage, he did not touch the controls from the time the top floor doors mechanically closed themselves till the time the lobby was reached. Now he was twitching the control switch back and forth, from Off to On.

And the elevator was slowing down.

The swift start had slowed to a smooth crawl downward. And the crawl was becoming a creep. The floor numbers, that had flashed on the little frosted glass panel inside the cage as fast as you could count, were now forming themselves with exasperating slowness. Sixty-one, sixty, fifty-nine . . .

"Can't you make it go faster?" said Varley. "I never saw these cages go so slow. Is the power low?"

"I don't think so, sir," said the operator. He jammed the control against the fast-speed peg. And the cage slowed down still more.

"Something's wrong," whispered one of the girl secretaries to the other. "This slow speed . . . And it's getting warm in here!"

Evidently Varley thought so too. He unbuttoned his vest and took his fedora off and fanned himself.

"I don't know what the hell's the matter," he growled to the two men with him. "Certainly have to have the engineer look into this. There's supposed to be decent ventilation in these shafts. And if they call this express service . . . Gad, I'm hot!"

Perspiration was bursting out on his forehead now. He began to look ghastly pale.

Fifty-two, fifty-one, fifty . . . the little red numbers appeared

on the frosted glass indicator ever more slowly. The elevator would take five minutes to descend, at this pace.

"Something's the matter with me," gasped Varley. "I've never felt like this before." One of the secretaries was standing near him. She looked at him suddenly, with wide eyes in which fear of something beyond normal comprehension was beginning to show. She shrank back from him.

"Get this cage down," Varley panted. "I'm—sick."

The rest looked at each other. All were beginning to feel what the girl, who had been nearest him, had felt. Heat was beginning to radiate from Varley's corpulent body as if he were a stove!

"Good heavens, man!" said one of the two business men. He laid his hand on Varley's arm, took it away quickly. "Why—you're burning up with fever. What's wrong?"

Varley tried to answer, but couldn't. He staggered back against the wall of the cage, leaned there with arms hanging down and lips hanging slack. There was no longer perspiration on his face. It was dry, feverishly dry; and the skin was cracking on his taut, puffed cheeks.

"Burning!" he gasped. "Burning up!"

The girl secretary screamed, then. And the man who had put his hand on Varley's arm jerked at the operator's shoulder.

"For heaven's sake get this cage down! Mr. Varley's ill!"

"I—I can't," gasped the boy. "Something's the matter—it never acted like this before—"

He jerked at the controls, and the elevator did not respond. Slowly, monotonously, it continued its deliberate descent.

And abruptly a scream tore from Varley's cracking lips. "*Burning!* Help me, somebody—"

The slowly dropping cage became a thing of horror, a six-foot square of hell from which there was no escape because there were no doors opening onto the shaft at the upper levels, and which could not be speeded up because it did not respond to the controls.

Screaming with every breath he drew, Varley sank to the floor. And those who might otherwise have tried to help him cowered away from him as far as they could get. For from his

body now was radiating heat that made a tiny inferno of the elevator.

"God!" whispered one of the men. "Look at him—he really is burning up!"

The heat from Varley's body had become so intense that the others in the cage could hardly stand it. But far worse than their bodily torment was the mental agony of watching the thing that for a week had New York City in a chaos.

Varley had stopped screaming now. He lay staring up at the gilded roof of the elevator with frightful, glazing eyes. His chest heaved with efforts to draw breath. Heaved, then was still.

"*He's dead!*" shrieked one of the secretaries. "Dead—"

Her body fell to the floor of the cage near Varley's. The elderly woman quietly sagged to her knees, then in a huddled heap in the corner as her senses fled under the impact of a shock too great to be endured.

But the horror that had gripped Varley went on. "*Look! Look! Look!*" panted the office manager.

But he had no need to pant out the word. The rest were looking all right. They'd have turned their eyes away if they could, but there is a fascination to extremes of horror that makes the will powerless. In every detail they were forced to see the thing that happened.

Varley's dead body was beginning to disappear. The corpulent form of the man who a moment ago had been one of the biggest figures in the nation seemed to have been turned to wax, which was melting and vaporizing.

His face was a shapeless mass now; and the flesh of his body seemed to be melting and running together. As it did so, his limbs writhed and twitched as if still imbued with life. Writhed, and shriveled.

"*Burning up!*" whispered the office manager, his eyes bulging with horror behind their thick lenses. "*Melting away . . . burning up. . . .*"

It was so incredible, so unreal that it was dream-like.

The cage descended slowly, slowly, like the march of time

itself which no man could hasten. The operator stood like a wooden image at the controls, staring with starting eyes at the heap on the floor which had been Varley. The two business men shrank together, hands to their mouths, gnawing the backs of their hands. The office manager was panting, "Look . . . look . . . look . . ." with every breath, like a sobbing groan. And Varley was a diminishing, shapeless mass on the floor.

"Oh, God, let me out of here!" screamed one of the business men.

But there was no way out. No doors opened onto the shaft here. All in the cage were doomed to stay and watch the spectacle that would haunt them till they died.

On the cage floor there was a blue-gray fedora hat, and a mound of blackened substance that was almost small enough to have been contained in it.

Twenty-nine, twenty-eight, twenty-seven . . . The cage descended with its horrible, unchangeable slowness.

Twenty-five, twenty-four . . .

On the floor was Varley's hat. That was all.

The operator was last to go. Eleven, ten, the red numerals on the frosted glass panel read. Then his inert body joined the senseless forms of the others on the floor.

The cage hit the lobby level. Smoothly, marvelous mechanisms devised by man's ingenuity, the doors opened by themselves; opened, and revealed seven fainting figures—around a gray-blue fedora hat.

Three o'clock. On the stage of the city's leading theater, the show, *Burn Me Down*, was in the middle of the first act of its matinee performance.

The show was a musical comedy, built around a famous comedian. His songs and dances and patter carried it. To see him, and him alone, the crowds came. Worth millions, shrewd, and at the same time as common as the least who saw him from the galleries, he was the idol of the stage.

He sat on a stool in the wings now, chin on fist, moodily watching the revue dance of twenty bare-legged girls billed as the

world's most beautiful. His heavy black eyebrows were down in a straight line over eyes like ink-spots behind comedy horn-rimmed glasses. His slight, lithe body was tense.

"Your cue in a minute, Mr. Croy," warned the manager.

"Hell, don't you suppose I know it?" snapped the comedian. Then his scowl disappeared for a moment. "Sorry."

The manager stared. Croy's good humor and even temper were proverbial in the theater. No one had ever seen him act like this before.

"Anything wrong?" he asked.

"Yeah, I don't feel so hot," said Croy, scowling again. "Rather, I feel *too* hot! Like I was burning up with a fever or something."

He passed a handkerchief over his forehead. "And I feel like trouble's coming," he added. He took a rabbit's foot from his vest pocket and squeezed it. "Heavy trouble,"

The manager bit his lip. Croy was the hit of the show—*was* the show. "Knock off for the afternoon if you feel bad," he advised. "We'll have Charley do your stuff. We can get away with it at a matinee—"

"And have the mob on your neck," interrupted Croy, without false modesty. "It's me they come to see. I'll go on with it, and have a rest afterward . . ."

The twenty girls swept forward in a last pirouette and danced toward the wings. Croy stood up.

"It must be a fever," he muttered, mopping at his face again. "Never felt like this before, though."

The stage door attendant burst into the wings and ran toward the manager. The manager started to reprimand him for leaving his post, then saw the afternoon newspaper he was waving.

He took it from the man's hand, glanced at the headlines.

"What!" he gasped. "A man burn up? They're crazy! How could a . . . Varley—biggest man in the city! . . ."

He started toward the comedian.

"My God, could it be the same thing happening here? . . . Croy! Croy—wait"

But the famous comedian was already on the stage, catapulting to the center of it in the ludicrous stumble, barely escaping a fall, that was his specialty.

The manager, clutching the newspaper, stood in the wings with death-white face, and watched. Croy went into a dance to the rhythm of the theme song of the show. He was terribly pale, and the manager saw him stagger over a difficult step. Then his voice rose with the words of the song:

"Burn me down, baby. Don't say maybe. Put your lips against my lips—and *burn me down!*"

The audience half rose. Croy had fallen to his knees on a dance turn. The manager saw that the perspiration that had dewed his forehead no longer showed. His skin looked dry, cracked.

Croy got up. The audience settled back again, wondering if the fall had been part of his act. Croy resumed his steps and his singing. But his voice was barely audible beyond the fifth row:

"Burn me down, Sadie. Oh-h-h, lady! Look into my eyes and *burn me—*"

Croy stopped. His words ended in a wild high note. Then he screamed almost like a woman and his hands went to his throat. They tore at his collar and tie.

"Burning!" he screamed. *Burning—*"

The manager leaned, shaking against a pillar. The newspaper, with the account in it of what had happened to Varley, rattled to the floor.

It was the same! The same awful thing was happening to Croy! "Curtain!" he croaked. "Ring down the curtain!"

Now the audience was standing up, some of them indeed climbing to their seats to see what was happening on the stage. Croy was prone on the boards, writhing, shrieking. The canvas backdrop billowed a little with the heat coming from his body.

"Curtain!" roared the manager, "For God's sake—are you deaf?"

The curtain dropped. Croy's convulsed body was hidden from the sight of the audience. With the curtain's fall, he stopped screaming. It was as though the thing had sliced through the

sound like a great descending guillotine. But it was not the curtain that had killed the sound.

Croy was dead. His limbs still jerked and writhed. But it was not the movement of life. It was the movement of a twisted roll of paper that writhes and jerks as it is consumed in flame.

The manager drew a deep breath. Then, with his knees trembling, he walked out onto the stage.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he announced, trying to make his voice sound out over the pandemonium that ruled over the theater. "Mr. Croy has had a heart attack. The show will not go on. You may get your money at the box-office on the way out."

He fairly ran from the stage and back of the curtain, where terrified girls and men were clumped around Croy's body—or what was left of it. Heart attack! The manager's mouth distorted over that description.

Croy's body had shrunk—or, rather, *melted*—to half its normal size. His features were indistinguishable, like the features of a wax head with a fire under it. His clothes were smoldering. The heat was such that it was hard to stand within a yard of him. The big, horn-rimmed glasses slid from his face. His body diminished, diminished . . .

A stage hand came racing back. Behind him trotted a plump man in black with rimless spectacles over his eyes.

"I got a doctor," the stage hand gasped. "From the audience."

He stopped. And the doctor stared at the place where Croy had lain, and then gazed around at the faces of the others.

"Well?" he said. "Where is Croy? I was told he was dangerously ill."

No one answered. One after another stared back into his face with the eyes of maniacs. "Where is he, I say?" snapped the doctor. "I was told—"

He stopped, aware at last that something far worse than ordinary illness was afoot back here.

The manager's lips moved. Words finally came. "Croy is—was—there."

His pointing finger leveled tremulously at a spot on the stage. Then he fell, pitching forward on his face like a dead man.

And the point on the stage he had designated was empty. Only a blackened patch was there, with a little smoke drifting up from it. A blackened patch—with a pair of comedy horn-rimmed glasses beside it.

2

IN THE ELEVATOR CONTROL ROOM of the Northern State Building, a man in the coveralls of an electrician bent over the great switchboard. He was examining the automatic control switch of the elevator in which Varley had ridden down from his top-floor office for the last time in life; had ridden down—but never reached the bottom!

Grease smeared the man's face and hands. But an especially keen observer would have noted several things about the seeming electrician that did not match his profession.

He would have noticed that the man's body was as lithe and muscular as that of a dancer; that his hands were only superficially smeared with grease, and were without calluses; that his fingers were the long, steely strong ones of a great surgeon or musician. Then, if he were one of the very few in New York capable of the identification, he might have gone further and glanced into the man's steely eyes under coal-black eyebrows, and stared at his patrician nose and strong chin and firm, large mouth—and have named him as Ascott Keane.

The building manager stood beside Keane. He had treated Keane as an ordinary electrician while the building engineer was near by. Now he gave him the deference due one of the greatest criminal investigators of all time. "Well, Mr. Keane?" he said.

"It's about as I thought," Keane said. "A device on the order of a big rheostat was placed on the switch circuit. In that way the descent of the elevator could be slowed as much as the person manipulating the switch desired."

"But why was the elevator Mr. Varley rode down in made to go slower? Did the slowness have anything to do with his death?"

"No. it had to do only with the spectacle of his death!" Keane's face was very grim. His jaw was a hard square. "The man who killed Varley wanted to be sure that his death, and

dissolution, were witnessed lingeringly and unmistakably, so that the full terror of it could be brought out."

He straightened up, walked toward the door. "You've set an office aside for me?"

"Yes. It's next to my own on the sixtieth floor. But you aren't going to it yet, are you?"

"Yes. Why not?"

"Well, there might be fingerprints. Whoever tampered with the control board might not have been careful about clues."

A mirthless smile appeared on Keane's firm lips. "Fingerprints! My dear sir! You don't know Doctor Satan, I'm afraid."

"Doctor Sat—"

The building manager clenched his hands excitedly. "Then you already know about the phone call to Mr. Varley just before he died."

"No," said Keane, "I don't."

"But you named the man who called—"

"Only because I know who did this— have known since I first heard of it. Not from any proofs I've found or will ever find. Tell me about the phone call."

"There isn't much. I'd hardly thought of it till you spoke of a Doctor Satan . . . Varley was leaving his office for lunch when his telephone rang. I was in his office about a lease and I couldn't help hearing a little of it—his words, that is. I gathered that somebody calling himself Doctor Satan was talking to Varley about insurance."

"Insurance!"

"Yes. Though what a physician should be doing selling insurance, I couldn't say—"

"Doctor Satan is not exactly a physician," Keane interrupted dryly. "Go on."

"That's all there is to tell. The man at the other end of the wire calling himself Doctor Satan seemed to want to insist that Varley take out some sort of insurance, till finally Varley just hung up on him. He turned to me and said something about being called by cranks and nuts, and went out to the elevator."

Keane walked from the control room, with the building manager beside him. He went to the elevator shafts.

"Sixty," he said to the operator.

In the elevator, he became the humble workman again. The manager treated him as such. "When you're through with the faulty wiring in sixty, come to my office," he said.

Keane nodded respectfully, then got out at the sixtieth floor.

A suite of two large offices had been set aside for him. There was a door through a regular anteroom, and a smaller, private entrance leading directly into the rear of the two offices.

Keane went through the private entrance. A girl, seated beside a flat-topped desk, got up. She was tall, quietly lovely, with dark blue eyes and copper-brown hair. This was Beatrice Dale, Keane's more-than-secretary.

"Visitors?" said Keane, as she handed a calling-card to him.

She nodded. "Walter P. Kessler, one of the six you listed as most likely to receive Doctor Satan's first attentions in this new scheme of his."

Keane was running a towel over his face, taking off the grease—which was not grease but dark-colored soap. He took off the electrician's coveralls, emerging in a perfectly tailored blue serge suit complete save for his coat. The coat he took from a closet, shrugging into it as he approached the desk and sat down.

"What did you find out, Ascott?" said Beatrice.

Her face was pale, but her voice was calm, controlled. She had worked with Keane long enough to know how to face the horrors devised by Doctor Satan calmly, if not fearlessly.

"From the control room?" said Keane. "Nothing. The elevator was slowed simply to make the tragic end of Varley more spectacular. And there is Doctor Satan's autograph! The spectacular! All of his plans are marked by it."

"But you found out nothing of the nature of his plans?"

"I got a hint. It's an insurance project."

"Insurance!"

Keane smiled. There was no humor in the smile. There had been no humor in his smiles—or in his soul—since he had first met Doctor Satan, and there would be none till finally, somehow, he

overcame the diabolical person who, already wealthy beyond the hopes of the average men, was amusing himself by gathering more wealth in a series of crimes as weird as they were inhuman.

"Yes, insurance. Send in Kessler, Beatrice."

The girl bit her lip. Keane had told her nothing. And the fact that she was burning to know what scraps of information he had picked up showed in her face. But she turned obediently and went to the door leading into the front office.

She came back in a moment with a man who was so anxious to get in that he almost trod on her heels. The man, Walter P. Kessler, was twisting a felt hat to ruins in his desperate fingers; and his brown eyes were like the eyes of a horrified animal as he strode toward Keane's desk.

"Keane!" He paused, looked at the girl, gazed around the office. "I still can't quite understand this. I've known you for years as a rich man's son who never worked in his life and knew nothing but polo and first editions. Now they tell me you are the only man in the world who can help me in my trouble."

"If your trouble has to do with Doctor Satan—and of course it has—I may be able to help," said Keane. "As for the polo and first editions—it is helpful in my hobby of criminology to be known as an idler. You will be asked to keep my real activities hidden."

"Of course," gasped Kessler. "And if ever I can do anything for you in return for your help now—"

Keane waved his hand, "Tell me about the insurance proposition," he said.

"Are you a mind-reader?" exclaimed Kessler.

"No. There's no time to explain. Go ahead."

Kessler dug into his inside coat pocket.

"It's about insurance, all right. And it's sponsored by a man who calls himself Doctor Satan. Though how you knew?"

He handed a long envelop to Keane. "This came in this morning's mail," he said. "Of course I paid no attention to it. Not *then*! In fact, I threw it in my waste basket. I only fished it out again after reading the early afternoon papers—and finding out what happened to poor old Varley—"

He choked, and stopped. Keane read the folded paper in the long business envelope:

Mr. Kessler: You are privileged, among a few others in New York City, to be among the first to be invited to participate in a new type of insurance plan recently organized by me. The insurance will be taken out against an emotion, instead of a tangible menace. That emotion is horror. In a word, I propose to insure you against feeling horror. The premium for this benevolent insurance is seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars. If the premium is not paid, you will be subjected to a rather unpleasant feeling of horror concerning something that may happen to you. That something is death, but death in a new form: If you do not choose to take out my horror insurance, you shall burn in slow fire till you are utterly consumed. It may be next month or next year. It may be tomorrow. It may be in the privacy of your room, or among crowds. Read in this afternoon's paper of what will shortly happen to two of the town's leading citizens. Then decide whether or not the premium payment asked is not a small price to pay for allaying the horror the reading of their fates will inspire in you.

Signed, DOCTOR SATAN.

Keane tapped the letter against his palm. "Horror insurance," he murmured. "I can see Doctor Satan's devilish smile as he coined that phrase. I can hear his chuckle as he 'invites' you to take out a 'policy'. Well, are you going to pay it?"

Kessler's shudder rattled the chair he sat in. "Certainly! Am I mad, that I should refuse to pay—after reading what happened to Varley and Croy? Burned alive! Reduced to a shapeless little residue of consumed flesh—and then to nothingness! Certainly I'll pay!"

"Then why did you come to me?"

"To see if we couldn't outwit this Doctor Satan in future moves. What's to keep him from demanding a sum like that every year as the price of my safety? Or every month, for that matter?"

"Nothing," said Keane.

Kessler's hand clenched the chair-arm. "That's it. I'll have to pay this one, because I daren't defy the man till some sort of scheme is set in motion against him. But I want you to track him down before another demand is presented. I'll give you a million dollars if you succeed. Two million . . ."

The look on Keane's face stopped him. "My friend," said Keane, "I'd double your two million, personally, if I could step out and destroy this man, now, before he does more horrible things."

He stood up. "How were you instructed to pay the 'premium'?"

For a moment Kessler looked less panic stricken. A flash of the grim will that had enabled him to build up his great fortune showed in his face.

"I was instructed to pay it in a way that may trip our Doctor Satan up," he said. "I am to write ten checks of seventy-five thousand dollars each, payable to the Lucifex Insurance Company. These checks I am to bring to this building tonight. From the north side of the building I will find a silver skull dangling from a wire leading down the building wall. I am to put the checks in the skull. It will be drawn up and the checks taken by someone in some room up in the building."

His jaw squared. "That ought to be our chance, Keane! We can have men scattered throughout the National State Building—"

Keane shook his head. "In the first place, you'd have to have an army here. There are seventy-nine floors, Kessler. Satan's man may be in any room on any of the seventy-nine floors on the north side of the building. Or he may be on the roof. In the second place, expecting to catch a criminal like Doctor Satan in so obvious a manner is like expecting to catch a fox in a butterfly net. He probably won't be within miles of this building tonight. And you can depend on it that his man, who is to draw up the skull with the checks in it, won't be in any position where he can be caught by the police or private detectives."

Kessler's panic returned in full force. He clawed at Keane's

arm. "What can we do, then?" he babbled. "What can we do?"

"I don't know, yet," admitted Keane. "But we've got till tonight to figure out a plan. You come to the building as instructed, with the checks to put in the skull. By then I'll have weapons with which to fight"—his lips twisted—"the Lucifex Insurance Company."

3

THE NATIONAL STATE BUILDING is situated on a slanting plot in New York City. The first floor on the lower side is like a cavern—dark, with practically no light coming in the windows from the canyon of a street.

Near the center of that side was an unobtrusive small shop with "Lucian Photographic Supplies" lettered on it. The window was clean-looking, yet it was strangely opaque. Had a person looked at it observantly he would have noticed, with some bewilderment, that while nothing seemed to obstruct vision, he still could not see what was going on behind it. But there are few really observant eyes; and in any event there was nothing about the obscure place to attract attention.

At the back of the shop there was a large room completely sealed against light. On the door was the sign, "Developing Room."

Inside the light-proof room the only illumination came from two red light bulbs, like and yet strangely unlike the lights used in developing-rooms. But the activities in the room had nothing to do with developing pictures!

In one corner were two figures that seemed to have stepped out of a nightmare. One was a monkey-like little man with a hair-covered face from which glinted bright, cruel eyes. The other was a legless giant who swung his great torso, when he moved, on arms as thick as most men's thighs. Both were watching a third figure in the room, more bizarre than either of them.

The third figure bent over a bench. It was tall, spare, and draped from throat to ankles in a blood-red robe. Red rubber gloves were drawn over its hands. The face was covered by a red

mask which concealed every feature save the eyes—which were like black, live coals peering through the eye-holes. A skullcap fitted tightly over the head; and from this, in sardonic imitation of the fiend he pretended to be, were two projections like horns.

Doctor Satan stared broodingly at the things on the bench which were engaging his attention. These, innocent enough in appearance, still had in them somehow a suggestion of something weird and grotesque.

They were little dolls, about eight inches high. The sheen of their astonishingly life-like faces suggested that they were made of wax. And they were so amazingly well sculptured that a glimpse revealed their likeness to living persons.

There were four of the little figures clad like men. And any reporter or other person acquainted with the city's outstanding personalities would have recognized them as four of the nation's business titans. One of them was Walter P. Kessler.

Doctor Satan's red-gloved hand pulled a drawer open in the top of the bench. The supple fingers reached into the drawer, took from it two objects, and placed them on the bench.

And now there were six dolls on the bench, the last two being a man and a woman.

The male doll was clad in a tiny blue serge suit. Its face was long-jawed, with gray chips for eyes, over which were heavy black brows. An image of Ascott Keane.

The female doll was a likeness of a beautiful girl with coppery brown hair and deep blue eyes. Beatrice Dale.

"Girse." Doctor Satan's voice was soft, almost gentle.

The monkey-like small man with the hairy face hopped forward.

"The plate," said Doctor Satan.

Girse brought him a thick iron plate, which Doctor Satan set upon the bench.

On the plate were two small, dark patches; discolorations obviously made by the heat of something being burned there. The two little discolorations were all that was left of two little dolls that had been molded in the image of Martial Varley, and the comedian, Croy.

Doctor Satan placed the two dolls on the plate that he had taken from the drawer; the likeness of Beatrice Dale and Ascott Keane.

"Kessler went to Keane," Doctor Satan said, the red mask over his face stirring angrily. "We shall tend to Kessler—after he has paid tonight. We shall not wait that long to care for Keane and the girl."

Two wires trailed over the bench from a wall socket. His red-gloved fingers twisted the wires to terminals set into the iron plate. The plate began to heat up.

"Keane has proved himself an unexpectedly competent adversary," Satan's voice continued. "with knowledge I thought no man on earth save myself possessed. We'll see if he can escape *this* fate—and avoid becoming, with his precious secretary, as Varley and Croy became."

Small waves of heat began to shimmer up from the iron plate. It stirred the garments clothing the two little dolls. Doctor Satan's glittering eyes burned down on the mannikins. Girse and the legless giant, Bostiff, watched as he did . . .

Fifty-nine stories above the pseudo-developing shop, Keane smiled soberly at Beatrice Dale. "I ought to fire you," he said.

"Why on earth—" she gasped.

"Because you're such a valuable right-hand man, and because you're such a fine person."

"Oh," Beatrice murmured. "I see. More fears for my safety?"

"More fears for your safety," nodded Keane. "Doctor Satan is out for your life as well as mine, my dear. And—"

"We've had this out many times before," Beatrice interrupted. "And the answer is still; No. I refuse to be fired, Ascott. Sorry."

There was a glint in Keane's steel-gray eyes that had nothing to do with business. But he didn't express his emotions. Beatrice watched his lips part with a breathless stirring in her heart. She had been waiting for some such expression for a long time.

But Keane only said: "So be it. You're a brave person. I oughtn't to allow you to risk your life in this private, deadly war

that no one knows about but us. But I can't seem to make you desert, so—"

"So that's that," said Beatrice crisply. "Have you decided how you'll move against Doctor Satan tonight?"

Keane nodded. "I made my plans when I first located him."

"You know where he is?" said Beatrice in amazement.

"I do."

"How did you find it out?"

"I didn't. I thought it out. Doctor Satan seems to have ways of knowing where I am. He must know I've located here in the National State Building. The obvious thing for him to do would be to conceal himself on the other side of town. So, that being the expected thing, what would a person as clever as he is, do?"

Beatrice nodded. "I see. Of course! He'd be—"

"Right here in this building."

"But you told Kessler he was probably miles away!" said Beatrice.

"I did. Because I knew Kessler's character. If he knew the man who threatened him was in the building, he'd try to do something like organizing a raid. Fancy a police raid against Doctor Satan! So I lied and said he was probably a long distance off." Keane sighed. "I'm afraid the lie was valueless. I can foretell pretty precisely what Kessler will do. He will have an army of men scattered through the building tonight, in spite of what I said. He will attempt to trace Doctor Satan through collection of the checks—and he will die."

Beatrice shuddered. "By burning? What a horrible way to—"
She stopped.

"What is it?" said Keane urgently, at the strained expression that suddenly molded her face.

"Nothing, I guess," replied Beatrice slowly. "Power of suggestion, I suppose. When I said 'burning' I seemed to feel hot all over, myself."

Keane sprang from his chair. "My God—why didn't you tell me at once! I—"

He stopped too, and his eyes narrowed to steely slits in his rugged face. Perspiration was studding his own forehead now.

"It's come!" he said. "The attack on us by Satan. But it wasn't wholly unexpected. The suitcase in the corner—get it and open it! Quickly!"

Beatrice started toward the suitcase but stopped and pressed her hands to her cheeks. "Ascott—I'm . . . burning up . . . I—"

"Get that suitcase!"

Keane sprang to the desk and opened the wide lower drawer. He took a paper-wrapped parcel from it, ripped it open. An odd array was disclosed; two pairs of things like cloth slippers, two pairs of badly proportioned gloves, two small rounded sacks.

Beatrice was struggling with the snaps on the suitcase. Both were breathing heavily now, dragging their arms as if they weighed tons.

"Ascott—I can't stand it—I'm burning—" panted the girl.

"You've got to stand it! Is the case open? Put on the smaller of the two garments there. Toss me the other."

The garments in question were two suits of unguessable material that were designed to fit tightly over a human body—an unclothed human body.

Beatrice tossed the larger of the two to Keane, who was divesting himself of his outer garments with rapid fingers.

"Ascott—I can't change into *this*—here before—"

"Damn modesty!" grated Keane. "Get into those things! You hear! Quickly!"

Both were no longer perspiring. Their faces were dry, feverish. Heat was radiating from their bodies in a stifling stream.

Beatrice stood before Keane in the tight single garment that covered body and arms and legs.

"These gloves on your hands!" snapped Keane. "The sack over your head. The shoes on your feet!"

"Oh, God!" panted Beatrice.

Then she had done as Keane commanded. From soles to hair she was covered by the curious fabric Keane had devised. And the awful burning sensation was allayed.

There were eye-slits in the sacks each wore. They stared at each other with eyes that were wide with a close view of death. Then Beatrice sighed shudderingly.

"The same thing Varley and Croy went through?" she said.

"The same," said Keane. "Poor fellows! Doctor Satan thought he could deal us the same doom. And he almost did! If we'd been a little farther away from these fabric shields of ours—"

"How do they stop Doctor Satan's weapon?" said Beatrice. "And how can he strike—as he does—from a distance?"

"His weapon, and this fabric I made," said Keane, "go back a long way beyond history, to the priesthood serving the ancestors of the Cretans. They forged the weapon in wizardry, and at the same time devised the fabric to wear as protection against their enemies who must inevitably learn the secret of the weapon too. It is the father of the modern voodoo practise of making a crude image of an enemy and sticking pins into it."

He drew a long breath.

"A small image is made in the likeness of the person to be destroyed. The image is made of substance pervious to fire. In the cases of Croy and Varley, I should say after descriptions of how they perished, of wax. The image is then burned, and the person in whose likeness it is cast burns to nothingness as the image does—if the manipulator knows the secret incantations of the Cretans, as Doctor Satan does. But I'll give you more than an explanation; I'll give you a demonstration! For we are going to strike back at Doctor Satan in a manner I think he will be utterly unprepared for!"

He went to the opened suitcase, looking like a being from another planet in the ill-fitting garments he had thrown together after analyzing Varley's death. He took from the suitcase a thing that looked like a little doll. It was an image of a monkey-like man with a hairy face and long, simian arms.

"How hideous!" exclaimed Beatrice. "But isn't that Doctor Satan's assistant Girse?"

Ascott Keane nodded. "Yes. I wish it were the image of Satan himself, but that would be useless. Satan, using the ancient death, would too obviously be prepared for it just as I was."

Beatrice stared at the image for a moment, perplexity in her eyes. "But—Ascott! Didn't you tell me that Girse was dead?"

Wasn't he—consumed instead of you when . . . ?”*

Keane nodded. “Yes, he was—and I was foolish enough for a while to believe what I saw as final. But Doctor Satan knows as much about the ancient evil arts as I do—at least as much—and I know of a way to bring a dead person back, even if the body is destroyed, so long as I had the foresight to preserve some parts like hair or nail-clippings. I forgot that any close associate of Doctor Satan must be killed twice, so long as Satan is free to work his magic. That is why I made this image of Girse as soon as I realized what Doctor Satan is doing. There's just a chance that he hasn't prepared any protection for Girse, on the assumption that I already considered Girse out of the picture forever.”

“It's made of wax?” said Beatrice, understanding and awe beginning to glint in her eyes.

“Made of wax,” Keane nodded.

He looked around the office, saw no metal tray to put the little doll on, and flipped back a corner of the rug. The floor of the office was of smooth cement. He set the image on the cement. With her hand to her breast, Beatrice watched. The proceeding, seeming inconsequential in itself, had an air of deadliness about it that stopped the breath in her throat.

Keane looked around the office again, then strode to the clothes he and Beatrice had flung to the floor in their haste a moment ago.

“Sorry,” he said, taking her garments with his own and piling them on the cement. “We'll have to send down to Fifth Avenue for more clothes to be brought here. I need these now.”

On the pile of cloth he placed the image of Girse. Then he touched a match to the fabric . . .

In the developing room, Doctor Satan fairly spat his rage as he stared at the two wax dolls on the red-hot iron plate. The dolls were not burning! Defying all the laws of physics and, as far as Satan knew, of wizardry, the waxen images were standing unharmed on the metal that should have consumed them utterly.

"Damn him!" Doctor Satan whispered, gloved hands clenching. "Damn him! He has escaped again! Though how—"

He heard breathing begin to sound stertorously beside him. His eyes suddenly widened with incredulity behind the eye-holes in his mask. He whirled.

Girse was staring at him with frenzy and horror in his eyes. The breath was tearing from his corded throat, as though each would be his last.

"Master!" he gasped imploringly. "Doctor Satan! Stop—"

The skin on his face and hands, dry and feverish-looking, suddenly began to crack. "*Stop the burning!*" he pleaded in a shrill scream.

But Doctor Satan could only clench his hands and curse softly, whispering to himself, "I did not foresee it, Girse. I brought you back with the essential salts, one of the most guarded of all occult secrets, and I was sure that Ascott Keane would never suspect. But he did, damn him, and he was ready for me . . ."

Girse shrieked again, and fell to the floor. Then his screams stopped; he was dead, and this time there would be no return; the essential salts could be used to restore a man only once. Girse's body moved on, jerking and twisting as a tight-rolled bit of paper twists and jerks in a consuming fire.

"Keane!" whispered Doctor Satan, staring at the floor where a discolored spot was all that remained of his follower. His eyes were frightful. "By the devil, my master, he'll pay for that a thousand times over!"

4

AT HALF-PAST TWELVE that night a solitary figure walked along the north side of the National State Building. The north side was the one the Lucian Photographic Supplies shop faced on; the side street. It was deserted save for the lone man.

The man slowed his pace as he saw a shining object hanging from the building wall about waist-high, a few yards ahead of

him. He clenched his hands, then took out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead.

The man was Walter B. Kessler. And the flourish of the white handkerchief in the dimness of the street was a signal.

Across the street, four floors up in a warehouse, a man with a private detective's badge in his pocket a pair of binoculars to his eyes. He watched Kessler, saw the shining object he was approaching, and nodded.

Kessler drew from his pocket an unaddressed envelope. In it were ten checks made out to the Lucifex Insurance Company. He grasped the receptacle for the checks in his left hand.

The receptacle was a cleverly molded skull, of silver, about two-thirds life size. There was a hole in the top of it. Kessler thrust the envelope securely into the hole.

The skull began to rise up the building wall, toward some unguessable spot in the tremendous cliff formed by seventy-nine stories of cut stone. Across the street the man with the binoculars managed at last to spot the thin wire from which the silver skull was suspended. He followed it up with his gaze.

It came from a window almost at the top of the building. The man grasped a phone at his elbow.

He did not dial operator. The phone had a direct line to the building across the way. He simply picked up the receiver and said softly: "Seventy-second floor, eighteenth window from the east wall. *Hop it!*"

In the National State Building a man at an improvised switchboard on the ground floor turned to another. "Seventy-second floor, eighteenth window from the east. Get everybody."

The second man ran toward the night elevator. He went from floor to floor. At each floor he opened the door and signaled. And on each floor two men, who had been watching the corridors along the north side, ran silently toward the other local elevators, which had shaft doors on every floor all the way up to the top. At the same time a third man, at the stairs, drew his gun as he prepared to guard more carefully yet the staircase, rarely used, threading up beside the shafts.

And on the ground floor within fifty yards of the man at the switchboard, a chuckle came from the masked lips of a red-robed figure who stood straight and tall in a red-lit room.

Across the street the man with the binoculars suddenly picked up the phone again.

"Damn it—they tricked us. Somebody took the money in on the sixty-third floor!"

Changed orders vibrated through the great building. And the red-robed figure in the room at the heart of the maze chuckled again—and moved toward the bench.

Doctor Satan picked up one of the dolls remaining there. It was the image of Kessler. He placed it on the iron plate, which was already heated by the wires trailing from the socket. He watched the little doll broodingly.

It writhed and twisted as the heat melted its wax feet. It fell to the plate. And from the street, far away, sounded a horrible scream.

Doctor Satan's head jerked back as if the shriek were music to his ears. Then, once more, his hissing chuckle sounded out.

"For disobeying commands, my friend," he muttered. "But I knew you'd be obstinate enough to try it—"

He stopped. For a second he stood as rigid as a statue swathed in red. Then, slowly, he turned; and in his coal-black, blazing eyes was fury—and fear.

There was an inner door to the developing-room, but the door was locked, and it still stood locked. It had not been touched. Neither had the outer door. Yet in that room with the red-robed figure was another figure now. That of Ascott Keane.

He stood as rigid as Doctor Satan himself, and stared at his adversary out of steel-gray, level eyes.

"It seems we are alone," Keane said slowly. "Bostiff, I suppose, is retrieving the money from Kessler. And Girse? Where is he?"

Doctor Satan's snarl was the only answer. He moved toward Keane, red-swathed hands clenching as he came. Keane stood his ground. Satan stopped.

"How—" he asked.

"Surely *you* do not need to ask that," said Keane. "You must have penetrated the secret of transferring substance, including your own, from one place to another by sheer power of thought."

"I have not!" rasped Doctor Satan. "Nor have you!"

Keane shrugged. "I am here."

"You discovered my hiding-place and hid here while I was out, a short time ago!"

Keane's smile was a deadly thing. "Perhaps I did. Perhaps not. You can provide your own answer. The only thing of importance is that I *am* here—"

"And shall stay here!" Doctor Satan's soft voice lifted. The fear was fading from his eyes and leaving only fury there. "You have interfered in my plans once too often, Keane!"

As he spoke he raised his right hand with the thumb and forefinger forming an odd, eery angle.

"'Out of the everywhere into the here,'" he quoted softly. "I have servants more powerful than Girse, whom you destroyed, Ascott Keane. One comes now—to *your own destruction!*"

As he spoke, a strange tensiety seized the air of the dim room. Keane paled a little at the blaze in the coal-black eyes. Then he stared suddenly at a spot in thin air to Doctor Satan's right.

Something was happening there. The air was shimmering as though it danced over an open fire. It wavered, grew misty, swayed in a sinuous column.

"'Out of the everywhere into the here,'" Doctor Satan's voice was raised in final triumph. "The old legends had a basis, Keane. The tales of dragons . . . There was such a thing, *is* such a thing. Only the creations the ancients called dragons do not ordinarily roam Earth in visible form."

The sinuous misty column at the right of the red-robed form was materializing into a thing to stagger a man's reason.

Keane found himself gazing at a shimmering figure that looked like a great lizard, save that it was larger than any lizard, and had smaller legs. It was almost like a snake with legs, but it was a snake two feet through at its thickest part, and only about fourteen feet long, which is not typical serpentine proportion.

There were vestigial stubs of wings spreading from its trunk about a yard back of its great, triangular head; and it had eyes such as no true lizard ever had—eight inches across and glittering like evil gems.

"A dragon, Keane," Doctor Satan purred. "You have seen old pictures of some such thing, painted by artists who had caught a glimpse of these things that can only visit earth when some necromancer conjures them to. A 'mythical' creature, Keane. But you shall feel how 'mythical' it is when it attacks you."

A hiss sounded in the dim room. The serpentine form was so solidly materialized now that it would scarcely be seen through. And in a few more seconds it was opaque. And weighty! The floor quivered a little as it moved—toward Keane.

Its great, gem-like eyes glinted like colored glass as it advanced, foot by foot, on the man who had pitted himself against Doctor Satan till the death of one of them should end the bitter war. But, Keane did not move. He stood with shoulders squared and arms at his sides, facing the red-robed form.

"'Out of the everywhere into the here,'" he murmured. His lips were pale but his voice was calm. "There is another saying, Doctor Satan. It is a little different . . . 'Out of the *hereafter* into the here!'"

The unbelievable thing Doctor Satan had called into being in the midst of a city that would have scoffed at the idea of its existence, suddenly halted its slow, deadly approach toward Keane. Its hiss sounded again, and it raised a taloned foot and clawed the thin air in a direction to Keane's left.

It retreated a step, slinking low to the floor, its talons and scales rattling on the smooth cement. It seemed to see something beyond the reach of mortal eyes. But in a moment the things it saw were perceptible to the eyes of the two men, too. And as Doctor Satan saw them an imprecation came from his masked lips.

Three figures, distorted, horrible, yet familiar! Three things like statues of mist that became less misty and more solid-seeming by the second!

Three men who writhed as though in mortal torment, and

whose lips jerked with soundless shrieks—which gradually became not entirely soundless but came to the ears of Satan and Keane like far-off cries dimly heard.

And the three were Varley and Croy and Kessler.

A gasp came from Doctor Satan's concealed lips. He shrank back, even as the monstrosity he had called into earthly being shrank back.

"'Out of the hereafter into the here,'" Keane said. "These three you killed, Doctor Satan. They will now kill you!"

Varley and Croy and Kessler advanced on the red-robed form. As they came they screamed with the pain of burning, and their blackened hands advanced, with fingers flexed, toward Satan. Such hatred was in their dead, glazed eyes, that waves of it seemed to surge about the room like a river in flood.

"They're shades," panted Doctor Satan. "They're not real, they can't actually do harm—"

"You will see how real they are when they attack you," Keane paraphrased Satan's words.

The three screaming figures converged on Doctor Satan. From death they had come, and before them was the man who had sent them to death. Their eyes were wells of fury and despair.

"My God!" whispered Doctor Satan, cowering. And the words, though far from lightly uttered, seemed doubly blasphemous coming from the lips under the diabolical red mask.

The hissing of the dragon-thing he had called into existence was inaudible. Its form was hardly to be seen. It was fleeing back into whatever realm it had come from. But the screaming three were advancing ever farther into our earthly plane as they crept toward the cowering body of Doctor Satan.

"My God!" Satan cried. "Not that! Not deliverance into the hands of those I—"

The three leaped. And Keane, with his face white as death at the horror he was witnessing, knew that the fight between him and the incarnate evil known as Doctor Satan was to end in this room.

The three leaped, and the red-robed figure went down . . .

There was a thunderous battering at the door, and the bellow of men outside: "Open up, in the name of the law!"

Keane cried out, as though knife-blades had been thrust under his nails. Doctor Satan screamed, and thrust away from the three furies, while the three themselves mouthed and swayed like birds of prey in indecision over a field in which hunters bristle suddenly.

"Open this door!" the voice thundered again. "We know there's somebody in here—"

The shock of the change from the occult and unreal back to prosaic living was like the shock of being rudely waked from sound sleep when one has walked to the brink of a cliff and opens dazed eyes to stare at destruction. The introduction of such a thing as police, detectives, into a scene where two men were evoking powers beyond the ability of the average mortal even to comprehend, was like the insertion of an iron club into the intricate and fragile mechanism of a radio transmitting-station.

Keane literally staggered. Then he shouted: "For God's sake—get away from that door—"

"Open up, or we'll break in," the bellowing voice overrode his own.

Keane cursed, and turned. The three revengeful forces he had evoked for the destruction of Doctor Satan were gone, shattered into non-existence again with the advance of the prosaic. And Doctor Satan—

Keane got one glimpse of a torn red robe, with dots of deeper crimson on its arm, as the man slid through the inner door of the room and out to—God knew where. Some retreat he had prepared in advance, no doubt.

And then the door crashed down and the men Kessler had stubbornly and ruinously retained in his fight with Doctor Satan burst in.

They charged toward Keane. "You're under arrest for extortion," the leader, a bull-necked man with a gun in his hand, roared out. "We traced the guy that took the dough from the skull here before we lost him."

Keane only looked at him. And at something in his stare, though the detective did not know him from Adam, he wilted a little. "Stick out your hands while I handcuff you," he tried to bluster.

Then the manager of the building ran in. "Did you get him?" he called to the detective. "Was he in here?" He saw the man the detective proposed to handcuff. "*Keane!* What has happened?"

"Doctor Satan has escaped," said Keane. "That's what has happened. I had him"—he held his hand out and slowly closed it—"like that! Then these well-intentioned blunderers broke in, and—"

His voice broke. His shoulders sagged. He stared at the door through which the red-robed figure had gone. Then his body straightened and his eyes grew calm again—though they were bleak with a weariness going far beyond physical fatigue.

"Gone," he said, more to himself than to anyone in the red-lit room. "But I'll find him again. And *next* time I'll fight him in some place where no outside interference can save him."

Editorial Note: This story, as well as the preceding tale in the series, *The Consuming Flame*, has been slightly revised in order to eliminate certain inconsistencies in the original versions.



By Hands Of The Dead

by Francis Flagg

Norton and I met Peter Strong at one of Mrs. Tibbet's Sunday night gatherings, in 1931. Mrs. Tibbet was a charming old lady who believed in spiritualism; a spiritualist society held weekly meetings at her parlors and one saw some inexplicable things there. One night a medium—a big, fleshy woman who resembled pictures of Madame Blavatzky—gave a rather disturbing performance. The room was darkened as usual, but a veiled globe threw a faint light upon an area of floor in our midst.

We sat in a half circle, facing the cabinet, and holding hands. Suddenly the curtains of the cabinet parted and something came

“... I wanted to materialize a spirit. And I wanted to materialize it under perfectly scientific conditions.” And Peter Strong claimed that the machine he had built would do just that.

FRANCIS FLAGG (pseudonym for George Henry Weiss 1898-1946), had a very happy debut in science fiction, as this first story, *The Machine Man of Ardathia* copped a well-done cover by Frank R. Paul when it appeared in the November 1927 issue of *AMAZING STORIES*. Although he appeared rarely, Flagg's tales were very well liked both by science fiction and weird story readers, and this present one is the second of two he did for Harry Bates's *STRANGE TALES*.

into the room, something abnormally broad and squat. All this time the sound of heavy breathing and occasional cries as if of pain, came from the cabinet. The thing which now undulated across the floor could not possibly be the medium, and I watched with a prickling sensation of the scalp until it reached the illuminated area. In the blacker portions of the room it had been distinguishable only as a luminous mass; but now it showed like white smoke, wreathing and churning. I felt Norton, who sat next to me, stiffen in his chair, and at that moment a woman screamed and someone snapped on the lights. The smoke vanished.

"Fake, of course," I said with a nervous laugh.

Norton nodded his head doubtfully; but the gentleman who had sat on my right, a man I had seen at the meetings for the first time, shook his head. "No," he said quietly, "that wasn't a fake, that was one of the odd times when Mrs. Powers had enough psychic units of electricity focused in herself to allow the materialization of matter plain enough to be seen."

I looked at the man with interest. He was of average height, slim and precise looking. His face was clean shaven, that of an ascetic, a scholar; he had a high forehead and wide gray eyes—the eyes of a mystic. His age I judged to be fifty-five or sixty.

At that moment Mrs. Tibbet bustled up. "This," she said, putting her arm around the shoulders of the man, "is a very dear friend of mine, and I want you to meet him. His name is Strong—Peter Strong."

We shook hands. "You mustn't judge spiritualism," he said with a smile, "by its religious aspects. As a matter of fact, the science of spiritualism has nothing to do with religion."

"The *science*?" said Norton.

"Yes, the science. Nothing is more exact than astronomy today, yet it had its roots in astrology. What you see in the spiritualist societies throughout the world, the mediums and their like, is but the primitive foundations of scientific spiritualism. It has its quota of quackery and fraud, just as astrology had and still has." He gave us his card. "If you should ever care to call on me," he said, "I would be delighted to discuss the subject further."

SEVERAL MONTHS PASSED, however, before we took advantage of that invitation. Mrs. Tibbet went to White Horse Canyon for the summer, and the meetings at her parlors discontinued; but except for week-end trips to Oracle, Norton and I were confined to the city. Norton as city editor of the *Gazette*, and I as circulation manager, had enough to keep us busy.

One hot August afternoon when the mercury registered a hundred-four in the shade and the office was a sizzling furnace, Norton poked his head into my sanctum and waved a sticky proof. "Read this," he commanded.

I took the strip listlessly. "Tucson inventor makes machine for raising spirits," I read. "Peter Strong, local scholar and psychic research worker, announces . . ."

I looked up at Norton with quickened interest. "Why, this must be the fellow we met at Mrs. Tibbet's."

"I am sure it is. What do you say if we run around and see him after dinner? Might be a story in it for the paper."

I assented; and that was how we came to meet Peter Strong again and to undergo the harrowing experiences set down here.

The house was an old one, set in the southwest part of town, a two-story rambling pile built of adobe and surrounded by overgrown gardens and a stone fence. The immediate neighborhood was given over to other large houses and substantial estates; yet we approached it through the squalid Mexican quarter where dark-skinned, exotic-looking men and women gossiped or smoked in doorways, and dirty ragged

(Illustration
by H. W.
Wesso)



children with vivid eyes and shrill cries rolled on the sidewalks and in the gutters.

As he carefully piloted the Ford, Norton told me something of Peter Strong. "I looked him up in our private morgue," he said, "and questioned the managing editor. Strong belongs to one of the oldest families in these parts. His grandfather was United States marshal hereabouts in the old days when Tucson was nothing but a cow town; and his father used to be mayor about twenty years back, before his death. Quite wealthy, I understand,

but most of the family fortune was lost in the 1913-14 business slump. At that, the present Strong, the one we're going to see, isn't poverty-stricken. Lives very quietly, though, and seldom goes into society. Lived abroad for years. Wife dead. Is considered an authority on psychical phenomena and generally held to be a bit queer."

As everyone who lived in Tucson in those days knows, the street lights were sparsely scattered. With some difficulty we located the desired estate and drove up a wide drive through a thick row of pepper and palm trees. The wide veranda was deserted, but the heavy front door was open, and even the screen door was flung back to admit more readily the faintly stirring evening breeze.

As Norton raised his hand to sound the brass knocker, a woman came down the stairs from the upper part of the house. She came from obscurity into the rather faint light cast by an overhead bulb in a colored shade, and I could not see her distinctly save to note the fact that she was tall and slender and clad in a skirt that reached to the floor. The woman paused at seeing us.

We both doffed our hats. "Is Mr. Strong in?" asked Norton. She did not reply, but instead beckoned us forward, and glided down the long hall, glancing over her shoulder to see if we followed. We started to do so, but at that moment a door at the end of the corridor opened, flooding it with light, and an elderly man in the quiet garb of a gentleman's servant faced us. The woman, we were both surprised to observe, had disappeared. "I beg your pardon," said Norton, in answer to the servant's suspicious looks, "but we are here to see Mr. Strong. We would have sounded the knocker, of course, but the lady—"

"The lady!" said the man, his expression subtly altering.

"Why, yes," replied Norton. "She invited us in. We would scarcely have entered otherwise. I don't know where," he said, looking about perplexedly, "she could have gone to."

The man made no reply but went to announce our presence to his master, and in a few minutes Peter Strong greeted us warmly.

"This basement room," he said, leading the way to it, "is my study and workroom."

It was a large place, and despite its cement floor, was comfortably enough furnished with rugs, easy-chairs and pictures, the one incongruous note being a work-bench set against the rear wall on which a variety of tools, odds and ends of wire, and other articles lay scattered.

"Yes," said Peter Strong, "I recollect meeting you at Mrs. Tibbet's very well. Michael," he called to the servant, "bring us something cooling to drink, will you? It's only an iced fruit beverage," he apologized, "but I never drink wine."

We sipped our glasses appreciatively. The kitchen door opened off the room in which we sat, and through the open door I could see the servant moving silently about. Twice I surprised him casting furtive glances over his shoulder. What could be agitating the man, I wondered.

"Yes," Peter Strong was saying, "I am at work on a psychic machine. There it is near the bench." He pointed to a contrivance I had mistaken for a radio. "But your reporter wrongly quoted what I said at the luncheon today. I did not say the machine was yet completed. As a matter of fact, I am waiting for a specially made transformer to arrive from the east before testing it out."

"But you believe it will work?"

His fine gray eyes, eyes that stirred me in spite of myself, lit up with enthusiasm. "I have every reason to believe that it will. This isn't my first machine; it is the culmination of a dozen machines. For fifteen years I have been building, experimenting. And there have been results. Yes," he said softly, almost to himself, "there have been results."

His eyes stared fixedly beyond me, and, following the direction of their gaze, I saw the door through which we had entered quietly open, and the woman of the hallway stand glancing in. Then she withdrew, the door quietly closed, and Peter Strong glanced back at us, a flush on his usually pale face. "Let me show you something." He took from a chest of drawers a number of cabinet size pictures. "With photographic devices in the machine preceding this one, I snapped these."

Norton and I regarded the pictures curiously. They showed vague, spiral-like bodies rising out of masses of vapor. The outlines resembled heads and shoulders as much as anything else, and in one or two profiles were clearly defined. Of course we had read about faked spiritualist pictures, but to suspect Peter Strong of knowingly perpetrating a fraud was impossible.

"With my earlier machines I received messages," Strong continued. "But I wanted more than messages. I wanted to materialize a spirit. And I wanted to materialize it under perfectly scientific conditions." He paused and regarded us tensely. The servant came in and removed the glasses and empty pitcher. "Yes," he said, "spiritualism is a scientific proposition. Not the spiritualism of the churches. Scientific spiritualism has no need of religion; no need of God. I don't," he said gently, "believe in God."

"Don't believe in God?"

"No."

"But," protested Norton, mopping his face, "something must be responsible for the world and the universe."

The servant returned with a full pitcher and clean glasses. It was very warm in the room despite the electric fan and the faint breeze blowing through the windows set high in the walls. I was conscious of the servant like a dark shadow going to and fro across the doorway. "Damn the man," I thought; "what is he so nervous about?"

Peter Strong filled his glass. "Something is responsible, of course, and that something is pulsations of magnetism from indivisible prime units of matter."

"And the prime units," queried Norton, "what created them?"

"They were never created."

"Being the 'causeless cause' of some of the metaphysicians," I murmured.

"But," argued Norton, ignoring my interjection, "why can't the uncreated be God?"

"The very idea of God is unscientific."

"And yet you believe in a future life?"

"Not in a future life," corrected Peter Strong, "but in the continuity of life. And I don't believe; I know."

"But," I exclaimed, "that is the stock statement of all mystics and religionists: they all claim to know."

"Yes," he admitted with a smile. "But they claim to know through faith, while I know through knowledge. Not through the knowledge of ancient mystical lore, but through knowledge of more recent discoveries in science. And," he added softly, "through a channel more intimate . . . more dear."

We sipped our beverage in silence. A shadow loomed in the kitchen doorway, the silent figure of the servant. "Consider this," said Peter Strong after awhile. "I have already told you that all life and mass owes its existence to pulsations of magnetism. Science calls this pulsation chemical affinity. But here is a copy of my theory; I typed it to read at the luncheon today." He passed Norton a piece of paper. We read it with care.

"So you see," said Peter Strong, "that Earth life is of one electronic density and spirit life of another. When a man dies, he is just as alive as he ever was, only his ego has a body invisible to us. But if a number of people physically *en rapport* form a circle, or if a vital medium goes into a trance, sufficient prime units of electricity may be generated for the spirits to build bodies dense enough to be seen. Those bodies will be no denser than the amount of prime units allows them to be. That explains why most spirit bodies and photographs of them are vaporous, unformed. However, the circle of human medium as methods of materializing the dead are primitive, uncertain, and open to all kinds of fraud and quackery. It is my aim, through the machine, to put spiritualism on a scientific basis."

ON OUR WAY HOME that evening, Norton and I discussed our visit.

"An interesting old chap, all right," said Norton; "and he certainly can make it sound plausible; but for all that I don't believe the dead can come back."

"Neither do I. They say Edison once tried to invent a psychic machine but gave it up."

Just before Norton dropped me at my door I mentioned what had been milling around in my mind all the time. "Damn funny about that woman," I said.

"Oh, I don't know. A maid, perhaps."

"But, where did she go to?"

"Popped through some door, I expect; there was one across from us, you know."

"But it was closed, and we never heard it open or shut."

Norton grinned, "I guess our hearts were thumping too hard for us to hear anything."

"But the servant's face! You must have seen the way he looked when you mentioned seeing a lady."

"Scared," said Norton. "Yes, I noticed. But maybe he had a woman in the house unbeknown to his boss."

"No," I said. "Strong knew the woman." And I told him about his looking at her in the basement doorway. Norton had been glancing elsewhere at the time and hadn't noticed.

"Well," he said reflectively, "it's none of our business what women the old fellow has hanging around. But then again, she wasn't dressed as a maid, if that's anything."

"And that servant was stiff with fright," I said. "I was sitting where I could watch him, and the way he'd look over his shoulder . . ."

IT WAS ABOUT FIVE WEEKS after the above conversation that Peter Strong invited us to be present at a demonstration of his machine. Besides ourselves and several people whom we did not know, there were present two gentlemen, both members of the society for psychic research. One was Doctor Bryson, a middle-aged man of commanding height and presence, head of a local sanitarium; the other was a professor of science at the University, Woodbridge by name, rather short and taciturn. Neither of them, it was plain to be seen, placed much stock in Peter Strong's invention. The doctor, though an interested investigator of psychic phenomena, did not believe in spiritualism. He professed to be a rank materialist.

"No one denies there are some things we cannot understand,"

he said, "but some day science will prove them to be but extensions of our physical powers haphazardly used."

The professor said nothing. "Conan Doyle—" began Norton.

"Doyle!" snorted the doctor. "Doyle was the most gullible man on God's earth. Why, he writes of a personal experience in London being told him through a certain medium miles away before the occurrence had time to be broadcasted. He naively asks how the medium could possibly have heard of it save through spirits. Evidently he forgot about telephones and telegrams, and the fact that some professional mediums belong to secret information bureaus with agents everywhere!"

We were sitting in what evidently had once been the main parlor, a large room almost devoid of furniture. Michael, I noticed, was the only servant visible. Indeed, discreet inquiries had elicited the information that the only other servant was a cook who came in by the day: a personable enough woman neither tall nor slim.

The night was unbearably hot, though it had rained throughout the afternoon and was threatening to do so again. The windows were all ajar. Attracted by the glare of the lights, I could see gnats and moths fluttering against the screen. Michael brought us iced drinks. "Mr. Strong will be here in a few minutes," he announced. We sat and chatted, and everything seemed very ordinary and unimpressive. Then Peter Strong entered the room and the atmosphere subtly altered.

"Gentlemen," he said, "all of you here tonight are disbelievers in spiritualism; that is why I invited you. I do not wish believers to witness this experiment, but skeptics." He flung off a large covering from what I had supposed to be a table in the center of the room and exposed his machine to view. It resembled, as I have said before, a radio. On the face of it was set a clock-like dial. Inside the box was a heavy, finely wrapped coil of wire. I am no electrician. I can only say that the box was intricately wired in accord with some principle evolved by its inventor; that there were two odd transformers. The whole affair rather disappointed me.

"What you are looking at," said Peter Strong, "is a mechanical

medium. Connected with an electric-light socket by means of this cord extension, it is supposed to generate sufficient prime units to make materializations possible." He made the connection as he talked, but did not turn on the current. "As you all know, certain vibrations are sensitive to light, therefore the room shall be darkened. Michael, will you turn off all but the colored cluster of globes?"

"But, Mr. Strong—"

"Please, Michael!"

The servant whose white, agitated face I had observed hovering in the background, did so with obvious unwillingness. The room was now in a red haze. Objects blurred into almost indistinguishable masses. I heard the snap of the switch as Peter Strong turned on the current. The room became very still. The droning of the machine and the loud beating of my own heart were all I could hear.

There is a curious thing about silence and gloom. They have a ghostly effect on the nerves. Or perhaps I am more sensitive to them than are others. I felt an almost irresistible impulse to speak, to move; and in fact I did fidget. Someone coughed; I coughed. There was an epidemic of clearing throats. A chair scraped the floor. Then again everything was preternaturally still and the buzzing of the machine filled the room with a steady monotonous noise that was itself a form of silence. So we sat, for perhaps five minutes, without a thing happening. Then:

"Look!" someone whispered.

Over the machine broke a fanfare of sparks. A murmur ran through the room. "Silence!" commanded the voice of Peter Strong. The sparks grew in intensity and from them swirled a luminous smoke. I felt the hair rise on my scalp, a chill tremor sweep up my back. It was not the sight of what I saw, no; but the sense of something evil, something inimical that brought me to my feet, tense, staring.

The sliding of chairs, the stamping of feet; apprised me that others, too, had risen. Someone's fingers bit convulsively into my arm, someone's hoarse breathing was next my ear. The luminous smoke eddied and whirled, and then suddenly it was pouring not

up but down, and in the midst of it a dark shape etched itself against the luminous glow, a shape that seemed to take on form and substance even as we watched, a shape that seemed to suck into itself the pouring smoke and flashing sparks—a *human shape*! For a pregnant moment I saw a half-visible face leer out of the mist. "God!" screamed someone hysterically, and then it happened.

Out of the luminous mist lunged the human shape, menacing, deadly. Chairs crashed as terrified men surged backward, stumbling, falling. "Miranda!" cried the voice of Peter Strong, something of horror and yet of entreaty in its note. Then, through the red gloom of that room, rang a noise that chilled the blood in our veins. Up, up, went a ghastly peal of eldritch laughter, the laughter of something insane, uncanny.

"Miran—" The voice of Peter Strong wavered, broke, into a horrible gurgle. There were sounds of threshing of forms. "For God's sake," cried someone, "turn on the lights!"

"The lights! the lights!" babbled another.

After a moment of bedlam, the lights flashed up. The room was a wreck, the machine overturned. All this we perceived in a glance. And then we saw the body of Peter Strong stretched inertly on the floor, his face horribly congested, his tongue protruding. But not that alone, for crouching over him like something vampirish and predatory, was the slender figure of a woman, her fingers fastened on his throat, throttling him, pouring forth a blood-chilling stream of uncanny laughter.

Like men in a dream, a nightmare, we stood; like figures caught on a mimic stage by the glare of a spotlight. For perhaps a dozen seconds we stood, unmoving. Then we were roused into action by the voice of the servant, Michael. "O, my God," he cried, "she's killing him! Killing him!" And whirling up a chair he sprang forward with an oath and brought it down with a thud upon the woman's head.

It was Norton who, with some difficulty, tore the stiffening fingers from Peter Strong's throat. Together we turned over the lifeless body of the woman, and then, at sight of the staring, implacable countenance, started back with a cry of amazement;

for the features upon which we gazed were those of the lady we had seen coming down the stairs on our first visit to Peter Strong!

The servant knelt by the body of his master, tears streaming down his face. "Oh, I warned him to be careful," he cried brokenly, "but he wouldn't listen to me; he wouldn't listen."

The doctor made a hurried examination. "Both of them are dead," he announced. There was a moment's silence.

"Who is this woman?" questioned Norton.

"His wife," replied Michael.

"His wife!" exclaimed the professor. "But I thought his wife died years ago?"

"So she did," answered Michael.

"Then he remarried again?"

"No, no," mumbled the servant. "You don't understand. This is his wife . . . the one who died."

We stared at him. The same thought was in all our minds. Evidently horror and grief had deprived him of his wits. But he read our thoughts.

"No," he said sadly, calming himself with an effort, "I am not mad. This is the only wife my master ever had; she who was Miranda Smythe, and who died in Paris . . . twenty years ago."

"But, good God, man!" exclaimed the professor. "Do you realize what you are saying? How can this woman here—"

"Sir," said Michael, standing up, "there is no rational explanation to give. My master married this woman when she was young and fair to look upon, but if ever there was a devil in human shape she was one. For ten years she made his life a hell. I know. I was with him through it all . . . more friend than servant . . . and many a time . . . But enough! She was unfaithful; she blackened his name; she tortured him in ways too vile and unspeakable to mention. And yet his love persisted . . . And one day in a jealous rage he struck her here"—the servant laid his hand on his breast—"and from the effects of that blow she died. But not before she cursed him, and threatened to reach back . . . from beyond the grave . . . and kill . . ."

He paused. The silence in the room was like a deep noise. "The affair was hushed up; but the grief of my master was terrible. It was then he took to spiritualism and was soon in communication with a spirit claiming to be his wife. Sir, there is more to this spiritualism than quackery. With my own eyes and ears I have heard and seen . . . But enough! She claimed that in passing over she had won virtue and understanding, that she forgave. 'Oh, how I love you now and wish I could be with you again!'" was her constant refrain. But I never believed her; one doesn't change so readily; besides there was something mocking in her tones, and several times I saw . . . 'Be careful,' I warned him. But he was adamant, sir, blinded with love and remorse, and when he discovered I was mediumistic . . ."

Again Michael paused. "I couldn't refuse him, of course, and it was through me—me who dreaded and hated her so—that she gave him the idea of his infernal machine." He pointed at the overturned mechanism. "You know the theory of its working. To generate enough prime units of electricity so that a spirit can build up a fleshy body with which to function on earth again. Oh, it's incredible, I know!" he cried, "but that is just what my master did. But his early machines were weak and she would wander through the house like a wraith—those gentlemen can tell you; they saw her one night in the hallway! She would wander sometimes for a week, until her electrical body dissipated, unable to harm anyone, though she tried . . . Oh, sir, I'm telling you that she tried hard enough! But my poor deluded master never saw. She smiled at him and melted in his arms, and he only dreamed and worked for the time when . . ."

"And that time came," said Michael tensely. "Tonight she had sufficient prime units for a complete materialization. Yes, she built herself a body of actual flesh and blood and with it reached back from beyond the grave to wreak vengeance on the man whose life she ruined, reached back with the hands of hate to strangle, to slay, to . . ." He pointed blindly at the body of Peter Strong and collapsed into a chair, burying his head in both hands.

The Monkey's Paw

by W. W. Jacobs

WITHOUT, THE NIGHT WAS COLD and wet, but in the small parlor of Lakesnam Villa the blinds were drawn and the fire burned brightly. Father and son were at chess, the former, who possessed ideas about the game involving radical changes, putting his king into such sharp and unnecessary perils that it even provoked comment from the white-haired old lady knitting placidly by the fire.

"Hark at the wind," said Mr. White, who, having seen a fatal mistake after it was too late, was amiably desirous of preventing his son from seeing it.

"I'm listening," said the latter, grimly surveying the board as he stretched out his hand. "Check."

"I should hardly think that he'd come tonight," said his father, with his hand poised over the board.

"Mate," replied the son.

The first wish was for two hundred pounds — but the way in which it came about was frightful. . . .

This classic tale first appeared in the September 1902 issue of *HARPER'S MAGAZINE*, and I am grateful to *Charles Hidley* for loaning me a copy so that I could get a photocopy of the original illustration by Maurice Grieffenhagen. This drawing is not only signed but dated, so that we can see that not only was the story accepted in 1900, but was possibly written earlier. I was astonished, at looking through H. P. Lovecraft's essay, *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, to find that he does not mention this tale, as it certainly conforms to one of HPL's expressed standards for excellence in weird story writing – that horror be suggested rather than explicitly detailed in all aspects. And while Lovecraft himself slipped in this respect at times (resulting in what Theodore Sturgeon once called “the over-description of the almost seen”), he more often succeeded in leaving hints in the reader's mind which suggested worse things than the ghastly descriptions we did get – horror lying behind the shambles described.

The tale of three (sometimes more or less, but the mystic number three is usually chosen) wishes is among the oldest in literature; and yet, despite all this, it never fails to catch the reader when the author has a fresh angle upon it – a different way in which the person involved manages to trip himself up, whether his intentions are good or otherwise. And it is because *The Monkey's Paw* is under-written that it is so effective as a radio play. I never heard it broadcast, but I can certainly believe Steffan B. Aletti's account of being chilled through when a certain knocking sound came over the air.

“That's the worst of living so far out,” bawled Mr. White, with sudden and unlooked-for violence; “of all the beastly, slushy, out-of-the-way places to live in, this is the worst. Pathway's a bog, and the road's a torrent. I don't know what people are thinking about. I suppose because only two houses on the road are let, they think it doesn't matter.”

“Never mind, dear,” said his wife, soothingly; “perhaps you'll win the next one.”

Mr. White looked up sharply, just in time to intercept a knowing glance between mother and son. The words died away on his lips, and he hid a guilty grin in his thin gray beard.

“There he is,” said Herbert White, as the gate banged to loudly and heavy footsteps came towards the door.

The old man rose with hospitable haste, and opening the door, was heard condoling with the new arrival. The new arrival also condoled with himself, so that Mrs. White said, “Tut, tut!” and coughed gently as her husband entered the room, followed by a tall burly man, beady of eye and rubicund of visage.

"Sergeant-Major Morris," he said, introducing him.

The sergeant-major shook hands, and taking the proffered seat by the fire, watched contentedly while his host got out whiskey and tumblers and stood a small copper kettle on the fire.

At the third glass his eyes got brighter, and he began to talk, the little family circle regarding with eager interest this visitor from distant parts, as he squared his broad shoulders in the chair and spoke of strange scenes and doughty deeds, of wars and plagues and strange peoples.

"Twenty-one years of it," said Mr. White, nodding at his wife and son. "When he went away he was a slip of a youth in the warehouse. Now look at him."

"He don't look to have taken much harm," said Mrs. White, politely.

"I'd like to go to India myself," said the old man, "just to look round a bit, you know."

"Better where you are," said the sergeant-major, shaking his head. He put down the empty glass, and sighing softly, shook it again.

"I should like to see those old temples and fakirs and jugglers," said the old man. "What was that you started telling me the other day about a monkey's paw or something, Morris?"

"Nothing," said the soldier, hastily. "Leastways nothing worth hearing."

"Monkey's paw?" said Mrs. White, curiously.

"Well, it's just a bit of what you might call magic, perhaps," said the sergeant-major, offhandedly.

His three listeners leaned forward eagerly. The visitor absentmindedly put his empty glass to his lips and then set it down again. His host filled it for him.

"To look at," said the sergeant-major, fumbling in his pocket, "it's just an ordinary little paw, dried to a mummy."

He took something out of his pocket and proffered it. Mrs. White drew back with a grimace, but her son, taking it, examined it curiously.

"And what is there special about it?" inquired Mr. White as he

took it from his son, and having examined it, placed it upon the table.

"It had a spell put on it by an old fakir," said the sergeant-major, "a very holy man. He wanted to show that fate ruled people's lives, and that those who interfered with it do so to their sorrow. He put a spell on it so that three separate men could each have three wishes from it."

His manner was so impressive that his hearers were conscious that their light laughter jarred somewhat.

"Well, why don't you have three, sir?" said Herbert White, cleverly.

The soldier regarded him in the way that middle age is wont to regard presumptuous youth. "I have," he said, quietly, and his blotchy face whitened.

"And did you really have the three wishes granted?" asked Mrs. White.

"I did," said the sergeant-major, and his glass tapped against his strong teeth.

"And has anybody else wished?" inquired the old lady.

"The first man had his three wishes, yes," was the reply. "I don't know what the first two were, but the third was for death. That's how I got the paw."

His tones were so grave that a hush fell upon the group.

"If you've had your three wishes, it's no good to you now, then, Morris," said the old man at last. "What do you keep it for?"

The soldier shook his head. "Fancy, I suppose," he said, slowly. "I did have some idea of selling it, but I don't think I will. It has caused enough mischief already. Besides, people won't buy. They think it's a fairy-tale, some of them, and those who do think anything of it want to try it first and pay me afterwards."

"If you could have another three wishes," said the old man, eying him keenly, "would you have them?"

"I don't know," said the other. "I don't know."

He took the paw, and dangling it between his front finger and thumb, suddenly threw it upon the fire. White, with a slight cry, stooped down and snatched it off.

"Better let it burn," said the soldier, solemnly.

"If you don't want it, Morris," said the old man, "give it to me."

"I won't," said his friend, doggedly. "I threw it on the fire. If you keep it, don't blame me for what happens. Pitch it on the fire again, like a sensible man."

The other shook his head and examined his new possession closely. "How do you do it?" he inquired.

"Hold it up in your right hand and wish aloud," said the sergeant-major, "but I warn you of the consequences."

"Sounds like the Arabian Nights," said Mrs. White, as she rose and began to set the supper. "Don't you think you might wish for four pairs of hands for me?"

Her husband drew the talisman from his pocket, and then all three burst into laughter as the sergeant-major, with a look of alarm on his face, caught him by the arm.

"If you must wish," he said, gruffly, "wish for something sensible."

Mr. White dropped it back into his pocket, and placing chairs, motioned his friend to the table. In the business of supper the talisman was partly forgotten, and afterwards the three sat listening in an enthralled fashion to a second installment of the soldier's adventures in India.

"If the tale about the monkey paw is not more truthful than those he has been telling us," said Herbert, as the door closed behind their guest, just in time for him to catch the last train, "we sha'n't make much out of it."

"Did you give him anything for it, father?" inquired Mrs. White, regarding her husband closely.

"A trifle," said he, coloring slightly. "He didn't want it, but I made him take it. And he pressed me again to throw it away."

"Likely," said Herbert, with pretended horror. "Why, we're going to be rich, and famous, and happy. Wish to be an emperor, father, to begin with; then you can't be henpecked."

He darted round the table, pursued by the maligned Mrs. White armed with an antimacassar.

Mr. White took the paw from his pocket and eyed it

dubiously. "I don't know what to wish for, and that's a fact," he said, slowly. "It seems to me I've got all I want."

"If you only cleared the house, you'd be quite happy, wouldn't you?" said Herbert, with his hand on his shoulder. "Well, wish for two hundred pounds, then; that'll just do it."

His father, smiling shamefacedly at his own credulity, held up the talisman, as his son, with a solemn face somewhat marred by a wink at his mother, sat down at the piano and struck a few impressive chords.

"I wish for two hundred pounds," said the old man, distinctly.

A fine crash from the piano greeted the words, interrupted by a shuddering cry from the old man. His wife and son ran towards him.

"It moved," he cried, with a glance of disgust at the object as it lay on the floor. "As I wished, it twisted in my hands like a snake."

"Well, I don't see the money," said his son as he picked it up and placed it on the table, "and I bet I never shall."

"It must have been your fancy, father," said his wife, regarding him anxiously.

He shook his head. "Never mind, though; there's no harm done, but it gave me a shock all the same."

They sat down by the fire again while the two men finished their pipes. Outside, the wind was higher than ever, and the old man started nervously at the sound of a door banging upstairs. A silence unusual and depressing settled upon all three, which lasted until the old couple rose to retire for the night.

"I expect you'll find the cash tied up in a big bag in the middle of your bed," said Herbert, as he bade them goodnight, "and something horrible squatting up on top of the wardrobe watching you as you pocket your ill-gotten gains."

II

IN THE BRIGHTNESS of the wintry sun next morning as it streamed over the breakfast table Herbert laughed at his fears.

There was an air of prosaic wholesomeness about the room which it had lacked on the previous night, and the dirty, shrivelled little paw was pitched on the sideboard with a carelessness which betokened no great belief in its virtues.

"I suppose all old soldiers are the same," said Mrs. White. "The idea of our listening to such nonsense! How could wishes be granted in these days? And if they could, how could two hundred pounds hurt you, father?"

"Might drop on his head from the sky," said the frivolous Herbert.

"Morris said the things happened so naturally," said his father, "that you might if you so wished attribute it to coincidence."

"Well, don't break into the money before I come back," said Herbert as he rose from the table. "I'm afraid it'll turn you into a mean, avaricious man, and we shall have to disown you."

His mother laughed, and following him to the door, watched him down the road, and returning to the breakfast table, was very happy at the expense of her husband's credulity. All of which did not prevent her from scurrying to the door at the postman's knock, nor prevent her from referring somewhat shortly to retired sergeant-majors of bibulous habits when she found that the post brought a tailor's bill.

"Herbert will have some more of his funny remarks, I expect, when he comes home," she said as they sat at dinner.

"I dare say," said Mr. White, pouring himself out some beer; "but for all that, the thing moved in my hand; that I'll swear to."

"You thought it did," said the old lady, soothingly.

"I say it did," replied the other. "There was no thought about it; I had just—What's the matter?"

His wife made no reply. She was watching the mysterious movements of a man outside, who, peering in an undecided fashion at the house, appeared to be trying to make up his mind to enter. In mental connection with the two hundred pounds, she noticed that the stranger was well dressed and wore a silk hat of glossy newness. Three times he paused at the gate, and then walked on again. The fourth time he stood with his hand upon it, and then with sudden resolution flung it open and walked up the

path. Mrs. White at the same moment placed her hands behind her, and hurriedly unfastening the strings of her apron, put the useful article of apparel beneath the cushion of her chair.

She brought the stranger, who seemed ill at ease, into the room. He gazed furtively at Mrs. White, and listened in a preoccupied fashion as the old lady apologized for the appearance of the room, and her husband's coat, a garment which he usually reserved for the garden. She then waited as patiently as her sex would permit for him to broach his business, but he was at first strangely silent.

"I—was asked to call," he said at last, and stooped and picked a piece of cotton from his trousers. "I come from 'Maw and Meggins.' "

The old lady started. "Is anything the matter?" she asked, breathlessly. "Has anything happened to Herbert? What is it? What is it?"

Her husband interposed. "There, there, mother," he said, hastily. "Sit down, and don't jump to conclusions. You've not brought bad news, I'm sure, sir," and he eyed the other wistfully.

"I'm sorry—" began the visitor.

"Is he hurt?" demanded the mother.

The visitor bowed in assent. "Badly hurt," he said, quietly, "but he is not in any pain."

"Oh, thank God!" said the old woman, clasping her hands. "Thank God for that! Thank—"

She broke off suddenly as the sinister meaning of the assurance dawned upon her and she saw the awful confirmation of her fears in the other's averted face. She caught her breath, and turning to her slower-witted husband, laid her trembling old hand upon his. There was a long silence.

"He was caught in the machinery," said the visitor at length in a low voice.

"Caught in the machinery," repeated Mr. White in a dazed fashion, "yes."

He sat staring blankly out at the window, and taking his wife's hand between his own, pressed it as he had been wont to do in their old courting days nearly forty years before.

"He was the only one left to us," he said, turning gently to the visitor. "It is hard."

The other coughed, and rising, walked slowly to the window. "The firm wished me to convey their sincere sympathy with you in your great loss," he said, without looking round. "I beg that you will understand I am only their servant and merely obeying orders."

There was no reply; the old woman's face was white, her eyes staring, and her breath inaudible; on the husband's face was a look such as his friend the sergeant might have carried into his first action.

"I was to say that Maw and Meggins disclaim all responsibility," continued the other. "They admit no liability at all, but in consideration of your son's services they wish to present you with a certain sum as compensation."

Mr. White dropped his wife's hand, and rising to his feet, gazed with a look of horror at his visitor. His dry lips shaped the words, "How much?"

"Two hundred pounds," was the answer.

Unconscious of his wife's shriek, the old man smiled faintly, put out his hands like a sightless man, and dropped, a senseless heap, to the floor.

III

IN THE HUGE NEW CEMETERY, some two miles distant, the old people buried their dead, and came back to a house steeped in shadow and silence. It was all over so quickly that at first they could hardly realize it, and remained in a state of expectation as though of something else to happen — something else which was to lighten this load, too heavy for old hearts to bear.

But the days passed, and expectation gave place to resignation — the hopeless resignation of the old, sometimes miscalled apathy. Sometimes they hardly exchanged a word, for now they had nothing to talk about, and their days were long to weariness.

It was about a week after that that the old man, waking



MAURICE GRIFFOUILLON 1892

suddenly in the night, stretched out his hand and found himself alone. The room was in darkness, and the sound of subdued weeping came from the window. He raised himself in bed and listened.

"Come back," he said tenderly. "You will be cold."

"It is colder for my son," said the old woman, and wept afresh.

The sound of her sobs died away on his ears. The bed was warm, and his eyes heavy with sleep. He dozed fitfully, and then slept until a sudden wild cry from his wife awoke him with a start.

"The monkey's paw!" she cried, wildly. "The monkey's paw!"

He started up in alarm. "Where? Where is it? What's the matter?"

She came stumbling across the room towards him. "I want it," she said, quietly. "You've not destroyed it?"

"It's in the parlor, on the bracket," he replied, marvelling. "Why?"

She cried and laughed together, and bending over, kissed his cheek.

"I only just thought of it," she said, hysterically. "Why didn't I think of it before? Why didn't you think of it?"

"Think of what?" he questioned.

"The other two wishes," she replied, rapidly. "We've only had one."

"Was not that enough?" he demanded, fiercely.

"No," she cried, triumphantly; "we'll have one more. Go down and get it quickly, and wish our boy alive again."

The man sat up in bed and flung the bedclothes from his quaking limbs. "Good God, you are mad!" he cried, aghast.

"Get it," she panted; "get it quickly, and wish— Oh, my boy, my boy!"

Her husband struck a match and lit the candle. "Get back to bed," he said, unsteadily. "You don't know what you are saying."

"We had the first wish granted," said the old woman, feverishly; "why not the second?"

"A coincidence," stammered the old man.

"Go and get it and wish," cried the old woman, and dragged him towards the door.

He went down in the darkness, and felt his way to the parlor, and then to the mantel-piece. The talisman was in its place, and a horrible fear that the unspoken wish might bring his mutilated son before him ere he could escape from the room seized upon him, and he caught his breath as he found that he had lost the direction of the door. His brow cold with sweat, he felt his way round the table, and groped along the wall until he found himself in the small passage with the unwholesome thing in his hand.

Even his wife's face seemed changed as he entered the room. It was white and expectant, and to his fears seemed to have an unnatural look upon it. He was afraid of her.

"Wish!" she cried, in a strong voice.

"It is foolish and wicked," he faltered.

"Wish!" repeated his wife.

He raised his hand. "I wish my son alive again."

The talisman fell to the floor, and he regarded it shudderingly. Then he sank trembling into a chair as the old woman, with burning eyes, walked to the window and raised the blind.

He sat until he was chilled with the cold, glancing occasionally at the figure of the old woman peering through the window. The candle end, which had burnt below the rim of the china candlestick, was throwing pulsating shadows on the ceiling and walls, until, with a flicker larger than the rest, it expired. The old man, with an unspeakable sense of relief at the failure of the talisman, crept back to his bed, and a minute or two afterwards the old woman came silently and apathetically beside him.

Neither spoke, but both lay silently listening to the ticking of the clock. A stair creaked, and a squeaky mouse scurried noisily through the wall. The darkness was oppressive, and after lying for some time screwing up his courage; the husband took the box of matches, and striking one, went down stairs for a candle.

At the foot of the stairs the match went out, and he paused to

strike another, and at the same moment a knock, so quiet and stealthy as to be scarcely audible, sounded on the front door.

The matches fell from his hand. He stood motionless, his breath suspended until the knock was repeated. Then he turned and fled swiftly back to his room, and closed the door behind him. A third knock sounded through the house.

"What's that?" cried the old woman, starting up.

"A rat," said the old man in shaking tones—"a rat. It passed me on the stairs."

His wife sat up in bed listening. A loud knock resounded through the house.

"It's Herbert!" she screamed. "It's Herbert!"

She ran to the door, but her husband was before her, and catching her by the arm, held her tightly.

"What are you going to do?" he whispered hoarsely.

"It's my boy; it's Herbert!" she cried, struggling mechanically. "I forgot it was two miles away. What are you holding me for? Let go. I must open the door."

"For God's sake don't let it in," cried the old man, trembling.

"You're afraid of your own son," she cried, struggling. "Let me go. I'm coming, Herbert; I'm coming."

There was another knock, and another. The old woman with a sudden wrench broke free and ran from the room. Her husband followed to the landing, and called after her appealingly as she hurried down stairs. He heard the chain rattle back and the bottom bolt drawn slowly and stiffly from the socket. Then the old woman's voice, strained and panting.

"The bolt," she cried loudly. "Come down. I can't reach it."

But her husband was on his hands and knees groping wildly on the floor in search of the paw. If he could only find it before the thing outside got in. A perfect fusillade of knocks reverberated through the house, and he heard the scraping of a chair as his wife put it down in the passage against the door. He heard the creaking of the bolt as it came slowly back, and at the same moment he found the monkey's paw, and frantically breathed his third and last wish.

The knocking ceased suddenly, although the echoes of it

were still in the house. He heard the chair drawn back and the door opened. A cold wind rushed up the staircase, and a long loud wail of disappointment and misery from his wife gave him courage to run down to her side, and then to the gate beyond. The street lamp flickering opposite shone on a quiet and deserted road.



By Hands Of The Dead

(Continued from page 51)

We stared at one another with pallid faces, at the bodies on the floor, at the bowed figure of the old servant. The doctor was the first to recover, though he, too, was still dazed.

"Nonsense," he muttered uncertainly. "Nonsense. Spirits be damned. This is a case for the police. Perhaps . . ." he glared suspiciously at the servant.

Norton and I quickly glanced at each other. The suggestion that Michael had had anything to do with the tragedy struck us both as preposterous.

"There is a phone in the hall out there," said the professor. "One of you had better call the police station. I'm sure the authorities will clear up the mystery."

But they never did, and in my heart I suspect that Michael was right.

This much only is known: That the body of the dead woman was never properly identified; that her face certainly bore a strong resemblance to early photographs of Peter Strong's wife. But of course it was impossible for a matter-of-fact police department to admit that the dead return, and that a woman twenty years a moldering corpse could commit murder. So, after a few weeks of investigation and grilling, they closed the case by entering in their files that one Peter Strong had come to his death, through strangulation, at the hands of an insane woman, name and antecedents unknown. The machine was broken up.

And there the matter rests.

Inquisitions

WHO DONE IT?

A Guide to Detective, Mystery, and
Suspense Fiction
by Ordean H. Hagen

R. R. Bowker Company, PO Box 617
Times Square Station, New York, N.Y.
10036; 834pp; \$18.95.

This one-volume encyclopedia is a landmark, and will be of inestimable value both to authors of mystery fiction and dedicated fans and collectors for many years to come.

Part 1 (pages 1-421) is titled "A Comprehensive Bibliography of Mystery Fiction, 1841-1967" and is, as explained in the introduction, "... a listing of the most important books in the field of mystery, detective and suspense literature from 1841 to the present." This includes juvenile novels "sometimes because they have an interest for the reader, and sometimes when there was no way of distinguishing them from an adult novel.... Some science-fiction is included, as well as ghost and supernatural stories when they have a murder or mystery background. Some true stories are even included, especially very early ones which had a big influence in the development of the genre." The original publisher is listed and some paperback editions, but it has been quite impossible to list *all* editions in either hard or soft covers in some instances. It stands to reason that a large percentage

of titles are out of print, or may temporarily be unavailable.

Mr. Hagen further notes: "Books have been classified as (D) detective, (M) mystery, and (S) suspense, but these classifications are arbitrary and my own." Actually, it is not the books, the individual titles, but the authors themselves who are so classified, and this strikes me as the one weak point of the section. It's not too bad when you see *one* of the three symbols beside an author's name, but when you see two or three, then the question of which of the books listed go under which classification, even on an arbitrary basis, becomes vexing.

The Comprehensive Bibliography is laid out thus:

AARONS, EDWARD SIDNEY (S)
(Pseudonyms: Paul Ayers, Edward Ronns)

The Art Studio Murders, Macfadden, 1950, 1963.

Farther down, we find: Black Orchid, by Edward Ronns, Panther, 1959.

Unless specified, then, the titles listed were published under the author's real name. Farther along in the bibliography, we find:

AYERS, PAUL, pseud; see AARONS, EDWARD SIDNEY.

Lovers of fantasy and science fiction will be pleased to note that ASIMOV, KORNBLUTH, KUTTNER, LONG, (Frank Belknap), and LOVECRAFT are listed, among others known to them. In

some instances, magazine stories are listed, but this is rare.

Part 2 is "A Bibliographic Guide to Mystery Fiction", broken up into eight sections:

1. "Subject Guide to Mysteries" deals with various types of backgrounds in which novels are laid, or in some instances themes. The breakdown is: Advertising, Amnesia, Antiques and Objects D'Art, Archaeology, Arson, Artists, Atomic Research, Ballet, Bees, Blackmail, Children, Christmas, Clergy, Communism, Gambling, Historical Novels, Homosexuals and Lesbians, Hospitals, Impersonation, Insurance, Lawyers, Libraries, Police, Railroads, Romans A Clef, Satire, Sports, Theater and Movies, Universities and Colleges. Particularly in the last twenty-five years, authors of detective and mystery fiction have taken more care that backgrounds be authentic in presentation, and have written either from a foundation of experience (*The Metropolitan Opera Murders*, by Helen Traubel), or painstaking research (*The Devil in Velvet*, by John Dickson Carr); a list of authors and titles is given under each heading, most of them postwar.

2. "The Mystery Novel on the Screen". This is selected filmography, dealing with films made from, or based upon characters created by, the following authors: Michael Arlen, Earl Derr Biggers, Jack Boyle, Raymond Chandler, Leslie Charteris, Agatha Christie, Len Deighton, Frederic Dannay and Manfred Lee (Ellery Queen), Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Davis Dresser, Mignon G. Eberhart, Ian Fleming, Erle Stanley Gardner, Grahame Greene, Dashiell Hammett, John LeCarre, Herman Cyril McNeile, John P. Marquand, E. Phillips Oppenheim, Edgar Allan Poe, Louis Joseph Vance, S. S. Van Dine, Cornell Woolrich. It's fascinating to discover that fifteen "Falcon" movies ensued from a single

short story by Michael Arlen; also the lengthy examination of films made from, sometimes enormous distances, from, the Sherlock Holmes stories, and often semi-galactic distances from the stories of Edgar Allan Poe. It's also something of a pleasure to catch so learned a bibliographer in a few errors in the S. S. Van Dine section of the filmography: (a) Basil Rathbone, not William Powell, played Philo Vance in the film version of *The Bishop Murder Case*; (b) although the author states that eight other actors were to follow Powell as Philo Vance, he actually lists only six. The Rathbone error corrected gives us seven, but who was the eighth? (c) *The Benson Murder Case* was not a film version of the book, but a screenplay which used some of the same names for its characters, outside of Vance, Markham, Heath, etc. Motive and method and identity of criminal are entirely different, although reasonably ingenious, particularly the method.

This is followed by a Film and Book Cross-Index, which is valuable for showing what films were based (or supposed to be based) upon which novels. Hollywood did not hesitate to buy movie rights to a detective novel by one author and then metamorphosize it into a vehicle for another author's series character. Thus, Philip Wylie's *Death Makes a Decree* becomes *Charlie Chan in Reno*.

Earl Derr Biggers himself got relatively good treatment from the studios, as I recall the films which actually followed a Charlie Chan novel. *The Greene Murder Case* was a reasonably faithful movie of Van Dine's book, although none of the actors who played "Philo Vance" quite correspond to the description of him given in *The Benson Murder Case*. The narrator tells us that John Barrymore, in *Hamlet*, reminded him of Vance. Of those I saw in the movies, Warren William seems to come closer to the description (there was

more than a touch of Barrymore in his appearance) and William Powell seems to project the character best. Basil Rathbone struck me as being frightfully miscast as Vance, as did Paul Lukas. I did not get to see Edmund Lowe (who I found good in other mystery films), and as for the "Philo Vance" movies apart from the books, it really doesn't matter who plays Vance, because this isn't Philo Vance anyway.

3. *Mystery Plays*, a brief listing of notable plays based upon books or written directly as drama, indicating the number of males and females in each (this section will be of value to amateur theatrical groups), and of the copyright holders, plus capsule comment. One error of omission: although Samuel French is indicated as copyright proprietor of Elmer Rice's *On Trial*, mentioned in the introduction to this section as "the first play to use the flashback as a means of telling its story," there is no cast breakdown.

5. For those who might like to read mystery novels set in particular parts of the world, section five, "Scene of the Crime" offers the same sort of breakdown as does section one, respecting subject matter; the headings are: Afghanistan, Africa, Albania, Andorra, Arctic and Antarctic, Around the World, Australia, Austria, Balkans, Belgium, Burma, Cambodia, Canada, Caribbean, Central America, Ceylon, China, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Egypt, Europe (continental), Fiji Islands, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hawaii, Holland (Netherlands), Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Java, Jordan, Korea, Lapland, Lebanon, Malaya, Malta, Manchuria, Mediterranean, Mexico, Middle East, Monaco, New Guinea, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Phillipines, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Romania, Scotland, South

America, Southeast Asia, South Seas, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Tahiti, Thailand, Trieste, Tunisia, Turkey, U.S.S.R., Vietnam, Virgin Islands, Wales, Yugoslavia.

5. *Heroes, Villians, and Heroines*, is a listing in alphabetical order of notable characters, falling in one of the three headings, and the author and book in which the character appears. It's a sizeable breakdown, running from page 497-587; if you are not familiar with the book or author in question you will have no idea from this as to which of the three the character is.

6. "Anthologies and Collections" lists both by title and by anthologist but mostly does not give breakdown of contents, although theme anthologies are identified.

7. "Award Winning Mysteries" lists the winners of Edgars (presented annually by the Mystery Writers of America) in the various categories, from 1945-1966, as well as the Dodd Mead Awards and The Crime Writers' Association Awards.

8. "Writings on the Mystery Novel", deals with some of the outstanding books and essays on the subject of mystery and detective fiction, noting title and dates of magazines where the uncollected essays were published.

The Appendix is entitled "Murder Miscellany", a short but fascinating grab-bag which I wish could have been longer, but is nonetheless fine as it stands; the contents are: Origins; Mystery Buffs; Organizations and Societies (Baker Street Irregulars, The Detection Club, The Crime Writers' Association, The Mystery Writers of America, Sherlock Holmes Foundation); The President's Mystery Story; Collaborations; Pseudonyms; Title Changes; Some Critics; Best Sellers, a brief Dictionary; Quotations; Pulp Magazines; Mystery Novel Abroad; and Necrology.

It's unfortunate that the Praed Street Irregulars could not have organized a year or so earlier, and thus obtained a listing. The necrology helps to make up the lack of birth-dates and death dates in the comprehensive bibliography, but does not entirely substitute for it. However, it's pleasant to see my old detective magazine titles listed among the pulps of yesteryear — a selective listing.

Finally we have the "Index to the Comprehensive Bibliography, 1841-1967", where every book there is here listed alphabetically by title, and credited to the author's real name, (not pseudonym, no matter how well known), so that you can turn directly to it.

This is truly a titanic job, and the presence of errors other than those I noted will not demean it. As persons who have tried to make discographies have discovered, publishers' records are not always accurate; and with detective novels, authors' records are often faulty, as well as publishers'. Books announced under one title sometimes undergo title transformation when published. For example, I am haunted by the feeling that I saw a Van Dine book entitled *The Purple Murder Case* in 1938. None is listed, while one I never did see, *The Winter Murder Case*, is noted as a 1939 publication, posthumous. But a possible explanation is that I saw a notice of *The Purple Murder Case* as "in preparation" in the copy of *The Kidnap Murder Case* that I read in 1938. In at least one instance, a title in this series was changed between announcement and publication, as *The Bishop Murder Case* was originally announced as *The Mother Goose Murder Case*. This is the sort of thing which can lead even the most indefatigable researcher astray, particularly when it concerns books which are rarely found these days.

Who Done it? is a reference book I

shall cherish and recommend most highly. RAWL

A COMPENDIUM OF
CANONICAL WEAPONRY
Compiled by Bruce Dettman
and Michael Bedford

(Being a Catalogue and
Description on the
Implements of Foul Play
and Justice in the Writings
of John H. Watson, M.D.)

Luther Norris, 3844 Watseka
Avenue, Culver City,
California 90230; 44pp;
quarto \$3.00.

* This is a companion in size, quality of paper, printing, and general excellent make-up to *The Sherlockian Doyle* and *The Problem of the Purple Maculas*, noticed here in earlier issues. It is of particular interest to Sherlockians, but less to those who have read little of the adventures of Holmes and Watson than the other two volumes. Only a page-by-page scrutiny of the entire Holmes canon could reveal whether the indefatigable authors have overlooked any weapon (or any object used as a weapon) in this catalogue. Each weapon is described; related to the person who used it, under what circumstances, and the particular story in which it appears.

I have two minor quibbles. On page 8 "Boar" must surely be "Boer", referring to those settlers in South Africa who gave Her Majesty's forces such trouble in 1900. And in the introductory essay (not the "Introduction"), "You Have Your Weapon, The Crime Is Done", we have a reference to something called an automatic revolver. Now there's a misnomer I haven't seen since a service man's letter protesting it was published in the January 1930 issue of *AIR WONDER STORIES*.

During the range of times dealt with in the Sherlock Holmes series, there were three types of hand-guns in general use.

The "pistol" was a single-shot affair, and became obsolete after Mr. Samuel Colt came forth with:

The "revolver", which was a pistol with a revolving cylinder to hold the bullets. The first models were the single-action type, in which the hammer had to be cocked with the thumb before the gun would fire. This was made obsolete by the later, double-action model, wherein pulling the trigger revolved the cylinder, cocked the gun, and fired it, all in one movement. It could also be cocked with the thumb for a single shot. Seasoned users of both learned to keep the hammer on a fired shell. Later on came:

The "automatic pistol", wherein the shells were fed into the firing mechanism

from a clip of bullets generally placed into the butt. Gas pressure automatically ejected the fired shell and pumped the next one into place. If the trigger was held down, the gun would continue to fire so long as any shells were left. This gun, however, did not make the revolver obsolete, partly because the automatic pistol had a discouraging tendency to jam.

You see, there is nothing that we can call an automatic revolver, because there's nothing that revolves in the automatic pistol, and the double action revolver is not automatic: the trigger has to be pulled for each shot.

Neither of these two matters (or a few other typos) are sufficient to spoil one's pleasure in so excellent a pamphlet, one that every active Sherlockian will want for handy reference. The illustrations by Tom Walker are a particular delight. RAWL



Cry, Baby, Cry

by Henry Slesar

THE LANDLADY LOOKED APOLOGETIC, not for the price of the two-room flat, because God knows it was cheap enough, but for its very existence. The paint was scrofulous, and the disease was progressive. The cracks in the plaster were wide enough to exhibit the bare bones of the ceiling. The furniture was rudimentary; the kitchen table wobbled badly, and the bureau in the bedroom had a drawer that not even Joe Frazier, heavily muscled from his job in the carpentry shop, could force open. Barbara, his wife, appraised the apartment with dull eyes and looked resentful when the landlady studied her maternity clothes and clucked with unwanted sympathy.

"It's not very much," the landlady said. "I mean, it's no place for the baby after it comes. I got a four-room apartment on the third floor that would be better, it's only fifteen dollars a month more."

They could hear a baby crying somewhere — but the landlady swore that there were no children anywhere in the building. . .

"This is fine," Joe Frazier said, out of stubborn mouth. He put their suitcases in the middle of the kitchen floor with a decisive thud. "It's only for a little while," he said, and looked at his wife's young face; her puffy eyes told him nothing. Then he gave the landlady a month's advance, and she went to the door.

"My name is Mrs. Sheldon," she said. "If you want anything, you just ask me."

When she was gone, Barbara entered the bedroom and sat on the bed, cocking her head to one side as if listening to the pitch of the creaking springs. Joe said: "You look tired, honey, you ought to rest."

"I'm all right."

"We're doing the sensible thing, you know that. We'll need every nickel when the kid comes."

"We never even saw him," she said bitterly, putting a fist on her stomach. "We never even saw the baby, and he's already making things bad for us."

"You promised not to talk like that any more."

"I can't help what I think. It was no time for a baby, Joe; it just wasn't the time."

"It'll be all right. I'm getting a promotion soon, I told you that."

"I'm not even twenty-one," Barbara said sadly. Then she stretched out on the bed, and closed her eyes.

Joe went into the kitchen and made a quick examination of the stove. It was gas-operated, but pilotless, and he struck a match to light one of the burners. It flared up with a roar, and he cursed. Then he rummaged around the closets until he found a coffee pot. He sat on a kitchen chair, watching the water bubble up in the percolator, thinking about Barbara and getting her image all confused with half a dozen Barbaras he had stored in his brain. Barbara perky at sixteen, Barbara in maternity clothes, puffy-eyed, sullen-mouthed, wretched after two years of marriage, hating the baby before she had a chance to love it, hating this drab and unexpected phase of marriage. Joe leaned heavily on the kitchen table, and the wobbling leg angered him. He slammed out of the apartment and went downstairs to the

ground floor. Mrs. Sheldon loaned him a handsaw, and he came upstairs with it to find the coffee spilling over the stove and running onto the linoleum. He cleaned up the mess as well as he could, and decided to postpone the amputation of the table leg until morning. Then he went to bed.

A saber blade bit into a knot of wood and made a screeching noise that jarred him awake. He sat up in bed and blinked into the darkness without remembering that he had changed surroundings since last night. It took him a moment to accustom his eyes, but even then all he could see was a thin strip of street light at the bottom of the window shade, and the vague bulk of the mammoth bureau in the corner of the room.

Then he heard the sound, and knew what had awakened him. It was a whimper, rising like the night wind and breaking into a thin, eerie cry, lonely and desolate, hardly human, yet a sound that brought a quick clutch of sorrow to his throat.

It was a baby's cry.

"Barbara," he whispered.

She stirred and turned towards him without waking. The cry came again, louder, more despairing, and she opened her eyes and looked at him.

"What is it? What's the matter, Joe?"

"Listen!"

She sat up. In the tiny bedroom, the wail of the infant was loud and demanding, hopeless and indignant at once.

"Oh, my God," Barbara shivered. "What is it? Where's it coming from?"

"I don't know. It sounds like it's right in the room!"

She threw herself into the protection of his arms. He pushed her aside gently and climbed out of bed. He fumbled around until he found the string of the overhead lights, a naked three-bulb fixture. When he pulled it, the sound vanished with the darkness.

"It stopped," he said. "It must have come from outside, somebody's apartment."

"But it *was* in here!" Barbara's hands trembled against the covers. "We heard it in here, Joe, you know we did!"

"It's some kind of fluke. That's all it is. Some kind of crazy echo or something. You know these old houses, Barbara, you know how they are."

She stared at him, wanting to believe. He drew in his breath, and turned out the light. He waited, but there was only silence.

"You see?" he said. "It was only a fluke."

Before reporting to work the next morning, Joe stopped at Mrs. Sheldon's apartment. The enveloping odor of beef stew preceded her to the door. Then he asked her the question, casually.

"Baby? Why, no, there's nobody has a baby that I know of, Mr. Frazier. Not in this building."

"Maybe next door then, huh?"

"That could be," the landlady said. "Was it keeping you awake?"

"Only for a little while," Joe said. Then he grinned. "But we might as well get used to that, huh?"

For some reason, Mrs. Sheldon didn't smile.

The next night was Friday. They went to sleep at midnight, after taking in the neighborhood movie. The cry came at two o'clock; Joe looked at the luminous dial of his watch when he heard it, and he prayed that Barbara wouldn't waken. But the infant cried on, louder and louder, as if insisting that the woman wake and hear its protest, too. She began to stir, and opened her eyes, and when she knew what it was, she gasped in terror and hid her face against Joe's shoulder.

"Oh, God!" she said, "Where's it coming from? Make it stop!"

"It's the damndest thing I ever heard. You could swear it was right in this room someplace."

"Turn the light on, Joe, please!"

He turned on the light, and the sound was no more.

"It's coming from another building," Joe said confidently. "I spoke to Mrs. Sheldon about it this morning, and she says there's a flock of babies in the next building. We're getting some kind of echo across the courtyard. I'll take care of it tomorrow."

"How?" Barbara said.

"I don't know, I'll figure a way. I'll fix up some of the cracks in the windows. I'll do something. You don't worry about it, Barbara."

"Joe, you don't believe that. It's not an echo, you know it isn't. It's right here! It's *him*!"

"What are you talking about?"

She clutched his arm. "You know what I mean. It's him! It's the baby. *Our* baby!"

"You're really nuts," he said, trying to grin. "Some women want pickles and ice cream, but you're different. Go back to sleep."

"It's him, Joe," Barbara said gravely. "You know it is. He knows we don't want him. He already knows."

"Damn it, go back to sleep!"

He clicked off the light, and flung the covers over his head. Beside him, Barbara lay still as death, and he felt cold all over wondering what she was thinking.

The next day, he used the saw and half a dozen other borrowed tools to work on the flaws in the apartment's structure. It was a job for ten carpenters and plasterers, but he did what he could. He sealed up the cracks in the windows, nailed up loose floor and wallboards, put domes of silence under all the furniture legs. He was exhausted by the end of the day. Saturday was their eat-out night, and he almost fell asleep at the table of the cheap seafood restaurant. They went to bed at eleven.

This time, Barbara heard the cry first. She sat up in bed and screamed.

"Stop it!" she shrieked. "Stop it, Joe! Make it stop!"

He grabbed her shoulders and tried to calm her. She whipped her head from side to side, yelling and screaming at the top of her vocal power, tears shaking out from beneath the lids of her tightly-shut eyes. And the infant, as if resentful of this competition in sound, cried louder and louder still, deafening in its volume, horrible in its gross piteousness.

Then Barbara flung herself out of the bed, out of the reach of

his arms. "The light!" he shouted at her. "Turn on the light!" But she was out of the doorway, heading for the kitchen. He followed her, but too late to stop her from opening the front door and running out to the stairs.

"Barbara! For God's sake!"

He heard her scream again, but this time knew by the tone of it that it was no longer a scream of undefined horror, but the anguish of anticipated danger. The soft thud of her body on the staircase froze him into inaction; for a moment, he was unable to go outside to learn what had happened.

"Mr. Frazier!" the landlady shouted from below. "Oh, Mr. Frazier, come quick!"

He raced down the steps to the contorted figure at the landing. She was still breathing, but her eyes were closed.

"Please," he said quietly. "Please, Mrs. Sheldon, call somebody."

He returned from the hospital at four Sunday afternoon, reassured by the words of doctors that the only consequences of Barbara's fall were bruises and shock. Barbara would be all right; the baby was unaffected. She had greeted this last good news with a strange half-smile.

He started wearily up the stairs when the groundfloor door opened, and Mrs. Sheldon looked out with worried eyes.

"Mr. Frazier? You been to the hospital?"

"Yes, Mrs. Sheldon, my wife's all right."

"And the baby."

"Nothing happened."

"Oh, I'm glad." She waited, not with an air of expectation, but with hesitation, as if there was something more she had to say. He prompted her.

"Mrs. Sheldon, I've told you what's been happening in our apartment—"

"Yes, Mr. Frazier."

"That baby's cry—it wasn't from any other building; it was in the bedroom. Right in the room with us. I could swear to that."

"I don't believe in ghosts, Mr. Frazier."

"I didn't say it was that. I just want to know—" He came closer to her. "Has this ever happened before?"

She looked at him thoughtfully, and then, making the decision to answer, opened the door wider.

"Come in," she said.

She told him the story over a cup of tea.

"It was maybe fifteen years ago," she said. "The building wasn't so bad run-down as it is now, but it still wasn't any prize. My husband and I were superintendents, only he died the year before and I ran the place all by myself.

"One day, this young woman comes to the door and says she wants to look at one of the apartments. She had this baby with her, all wrapped up in a blue blanket with stars on it. She said her named was Mrs. Barker, that her husband was in the Army, only somehow I didn't think she was telling the truth. Oh, she had a wedding ring and an engagement ring, real ones in my opinion. But the story about the Army, that just didn't sound true the way she said it, and later I heard that she had left her husband, that she hated him. And the worst part is, she must have hated the child, too, judging from the way she treated it.

"It was a real crying baby, the poor little thing. She was awful careless about feeding it and changing it and all those things, and it cried night and day. I used to hear her all the time, shouting and yelling for the kid to shut up, but the baby kept crying. It was a terrible pity, and I began to think she was up there drinking all the time while that poor infant cried its heart out. Can you imagine a mother like that?

"Well, things didn't get any better, she became a real problem in the building. She used to have this little girl come and baby-sit with the child when she went out getting drunk or whatever she did, but then the little girl's parents didn't want her associating no more with a woman like that, and she stopped coming. That's when Mrs. Barker started leaving the baby alone, can you imagine? All alone up there for hours, crying its heart out so's you couldn't stand it.

"Naturally, I couldn't let things go on like they were, what

with the tenants complaining all the time, so I had to tell this Mrs. Barker she had to leave. I still remember the day she moved out, coming down those stairs carrying that poor infant in that blue blanket with the alcohol stinking on her breath, it's a wonder she ever managed to walk down the steps.

"But that's when I saw it, Mr. Frazier, and to this day I can't be sure my eyes weren't playing tricks. But when she came to pay me the last couple of dollars rent she owed me, she kind of staggered and a little corner of that blue blanket fell away from the baby, and what do I see, what do I *think* I see but no infant at all, just a doll's face, Mr. Frazier. So help me, just an old painted doll's face.

"Then Mrs. Barker left and I never saw her again, but people kept complaining that they heard this baby crying in that apartment until I could hardly rent it anymore. That's just what happened, Mr. Frazier, and I'm sorry it upset your wife like that."

Joe put down his teacup.

"Then you think she didn't have the baby with her? You think she abandoned it?"

"I'm not thinking anything. I could have been wrong, my eyes were never that good."

"What do you think she might have done with it, Mrs. Sheldon? Where did she leave the baby?"

"I wouldn't know that."

"Do you think it might have been—still in the apartment?"

"I told you, Mr. Frazier, I don't believe in ghosts."

Joe stood up.

"Excuse me," Joe said.

He went quickly up the stairs. He entered the apartment and rummaged around the front closet for the tools he had borrowed from the landlady. He brought them into the bedroom, and looked around. Then he went to the bureau, and squatted beside it. With a chisel, he chipped away at the swollen wood of the second drawer. He worked with growing impatience, hammering and banging recklessly until the wood chips flew around him, and the drawer began to yield at last to the pressure of his strong

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fingers. Slowly, a fraction of an inch at a time, grunting with the effort, he managed to slide the drawer away from the stubborn grip of the bureau's frame. Then, with a hammer, he overcame its last resistance. With one final tug on both knobs, the drawer was opened, and there, lying on a moldy makeshift bed of pillowcases, was the pitiful skeleton of an infant, now still, now silent, no longer crying in protest to a fate which had slammed the drawer on its tender life.

The Reckoning

The consensus seems to be that our Summer issue (No. 13) was one of the better ones, but there was wide contention for first place, as four of the six stories were in the lead at one time or another. And again, none of the six drew so much as a single positive "dislike" vote; there were no X's noted in any letter or on any ballot. The two stories which came out at the bottom in the over-all estimation drew considerable commendation, as we have noted in *The Cauldron*.

Here is how the race finally came out: (1) *The Gray Killer*, Everil Worrell; (2) *The Veil of Tanit*, Eugene de Rezske; (3) *The Scar*, J. Ramsey Campbell; (4) *The Hansom Cab*, Ken Porter; (5) *Ancient Fires*, Seabury Quinn; (6) *Where There's Smoke*, Donna Gould Welk.

The Man Who Cast No Shadow

by Seabury Quinn

(author of *Ancient Fires*, *The Vengeance of India*, etc.)

"BUT NO, MY FRIEND," Jules de Grandin shook his sleek, blond head decidedly and grinned across the breakfast table at me, "we will go to this so kind Madame Norman's tea, of a certainty. Yes."

"But hang it all," I replied, giving Mrs. Norman's note an irritable shove with my coffee spoon, "I don't want to go to a confounded tea party! I'm too old and too sensible to dress up in a tall hat and a long coat and listen to the vaporings of a flock of silly flappers. I —"

Jules de Grandin was not surprised when an attack was made on one of Mrs. Norman's house guests — not after the anamoly he had witnessed. But he was astonished that the victim was a young man . . .

This is the tenth in the long series of tales that SEABURY QUINN (1889 —) wrote for *WEIRD TALES*, never suspecting when he started writing the first one in 1925 that he would still be relating adventures of de Grandin and Trowbridge twenty-five years later. A reproduction of C. C. Senf's cover illustration for this present story appeared in our Summer issue (No. 13), along with the first part of a chronological listing of the stories in the series. If you would like to read some further adventures therein, before we can bring you another, a collection of ten appears in the Mycroft & Moran edition of *The Phantom Fighter*, still available @ \$5.00 the copy from the publisher at Sauk City, Wisconsin 53583; and you need not worry about seeing any of these later in this magazine — not for many, many years at the earliest, and more likely, not at all.

"*Mordicu*, hear the savage!" de Grandin chuckled delightedly. "Always does he find excuses for not giving pleasure to others, and always does he frame those excuses to make him more important in his own eyes. Enough of this, Friend Trowbridge; let us go to the kind Madame Norman's party. Always there is something of interest to be seen if one but knows where to look for it."

"H'm, maybe," I replied grudgingly, "but you've better sight than I think you have if you can find anything worth seeing at an afternoon reception."

The reception was in full blast when we arrived at the Norman mansion in Tuscarora Avenue that afternoon in 192—. The air was heavy with the commingled odors of half a hundred different perfumes and the scent of hot-poured jasmine tea, while the clatter of cup on saucer, laughter, and buzzing conversation filled the wide hall and dining room. In the long double parlors the rugs had been rolled back and young men in frock coats glided over the polished parquetry in company with girls in provocatively short skirts to the belching melody of a saxophone and the drumming rhythm of a piano.

"*Pardieu*," de Grandin murmured as he viewed the dancers a moment, "your American youth take their pleasures with seriousness, Friend Trowbridge. Behold their faces. Never a smile, never a laugh. They might be recruits on their first parade for all the joy they show — ah!" He broke off abruptly, gazing with startled, almost horrified, eyes after a couple whirling in the

mazes of a foxtrot at the farther end of the room. "*Nom d'un fromage*," he murmured softly to himself, "this matter will bear investigating, I think!"

"Eh, what's that?" I asked, piloting him toward our hostess.

"Nothing; nothing, I do assure you," he answered as we greeted Mrs. Norman and passed toward the dining room. But I noticed his round, blue eyes strayed more than once toward the parlors as we drank our tea and exchanged amiable nothings with a pair of elderly ladies.

"Pardon," de Grandin bowed stiffly from the hips to his conversational partner and turned toward the rear drawing room, "there is a gentleman here I desire to meet, if you do not mind — that tall, distinguished one, with the young girl in pink."

"Oh, I guess you mean Count Czerny," a young man laden with an ice in one hand and a glass of non-Volstead punch in the other paused on his way from the dining room. "He's a rare bird, all right. I knew him back in '13 when the Balkan Allies were polishing off the Turks. Queer-lookin' duck, ain't he? First-class fightin' man, though. Why, I saw him lead a bayonet charge right into the Turkish lines one day, and when he'd shot his pistol empty he went at the enemy with his teeth! Yes, sir, he grabbed a Turk with both hands and bit his throat out, hanged if he didn't."

"Czerny," de Grandin repeated musingly. "He is a Pole, perhaps?"

His informant laughed a bit shamefacedly. "Can't say," he confessed. "The Serbs weren't asking embarrassing questions about volunteers' nationalities those days, and it wasn't considered healthful for any of us to do so, either. I got the impression he was a Hungarian refugee from Austrian vengeance; but that's only hearsay. Come along, I'll introduce you, if you wish."

I saw de Grandin clasp hands with the foreigner and stand talking with him for a time, and, in spite of myself, I could not forbear a smile at the contrast they made.

The Frenchman was a bare five feet four inches in height, slender as a girl, and, like a girl, possessed of almost laughably

small hands and feet. His light hair and fair skin, coupled with his trimly waxed diminutive blond mustache and round, unwinking blue eyes, gave him a curiously misleading appearance of mildness. His companion was at least six feet tall, swarthy-skinned and black-haired, with bristling black mustaches and fierce, slate-gray eyes set beneath beetling black brows. His large nose was like the predatory beak of some bird of prey, and the tilt of his long, pointed jaw bore out the uncompromising ferocity of the rest of his visage. Across his left cheek, extending upward over the temple and into his hair, was a knife- or saber-scar, a streak of white showing the trail of the steel in his scalp, and shining like silver inlaid in onyx against the blue-black of his smoothly pomaded locks.

What they said was, of course, beyond reach of my ears, but I saw de Grandin's quick, impish smile flicker across his keen face more than once, to be answered by a slow, languorous smile on the other's dark countenance.

At length the count bowed formally to my friend and whirled away with a wisp of a girl, while de Grandin returned to me. At the door he paused a moment, inclining his shoulders in a salute as a couple of debutantes brushed past him. Something — I know not what — drew my attention to the tall foreigner a moment, and a sudden chill rippled up my spine at what I saw. Above the georgette-clad shoulder of his dancing partner the count's slate-gray eyes were fixed on de Grandin's trim back, and in them I read all the cold, malevolent fury with which a caged tiger regards its keeper as he passes the bars.

"What on earth did you say to that fellow?" I asked as the little Frenchman rejoined me. "He looked as if he would like to murder you."

"Ha?" he gave a questioning, single-syllabled laugh. "Did he so? Obey the noble Washington's injunction, and avoid foreign entanglements, Friend Trowbridge; it is better so, I think."

"But look here," I began, nettled by his manner, "what —"

"*Non, non,*" he interrupted, "you must be advised by me, my friend. I think it would be better if we dismissed the incident from our minds. But stay — perhaps you had better meet that

gentleman, after all. I will have the good Madame Norman introduce you."

More puzzled than ever, I followed him to our hostess and waited while he requested her to present me to the count.

In a lull in the dancing she complied with his request, and the foreigner acknowledged the introduction with a brief handclasp and an almost churlish nod, then turned his back on me, continuing an animated conversation with the large-eyed young woman in an abbreviated party frock.

"And did you shake his hand?" deGrandin asked as we descended the Norman's steps to my waiting car.

"Yes, of course," I replied.

"Ah? Tell me, my friend, did you notice anything — ah — peculiar, in his grip?"

"H'm." I wrinkled my brow a moment in concentrated thought. "Yes, I believe I did."

"So? What was it?"

"Hanged if I can say, exactly," I admitted, "but—well, it seemed—this sounds absurd, I know—but it seemed as though his hand had two backs — no palm at all — if that means anything to you."

"It means much, my friend; it means a very great deal," he answered with such a solemn nod that I burst into a fit of laughter. "Believe me, it means much more than you suspect."

It must have been some two weeks later that I chanced to remark to deGrandin, "I saw your friend, Count Czerny, in New York yesterday."

"Indeed?" he answered with what seemed like more than necessary interest. "And how did he impress you at the time?"

"Oh, I just happened to pass him on Fifth Avenue," I replied. "I'd been up to see an acquaintance in Fifty-ninth Street and was turning into the avenue when I saw him driving away from the Plaza. He was with some ladies."

"No doubt," deGrandin responded dryly. "Did you notice him particularly?"

"Can't say that I did, especially," I answered, "but it seems to

me he looked older than the day we met him at Mrs. Norman's."

"Yes?" the Frenchman leaned forward eagerly. "Older, do you say? *Parbleu*, this is of interest; I suspected as much!"

"Why—" I began, but he turned away with an impatient shrug. "Pah!" he exclaimed petulantly. "Friend Trowbridge, I fear Jules deGrandin is a fool, he entertains all sorts of strange notions."

I had known the little Frenchman long enough to realize that he was as full of moods as a prima donna, but his erratic, unrelated remarks were getting on my nerves. "See here, deGrandin," I began testily, "what's all this nonsense—"

The sudden shrill clatter of my office telephone bell cut me short. "Dr. Trowbridge," an agitated voice asked over the wire, "can you come right over, please? This is Mrs. Norman speaking."

"Yes, of course," I answered, reaching for my medicine case; "what is it—who's ill?"

"It's—it's Guy Eckhart, he's been taken with a fainting fit, and we don't seem to be able to rouse him."

"Very well," I promised, "Dr. deGrandin and I will be right over."

"Come on, deGrandin," I called as I shoved my hat down over my ears and shrugged into my overcoat, "one of Mrs. Norman's house guests has been taken ill; I told her we were coming."

"*Mais oui*," he agreed, hurrying into his outdoors clothes. "Is it a man or a woman, this sick one?"

"It's a man," I replied, "Guy Eckhart."

"A man," he echoed incredulously. "A man, do you say? No, no, my friend, that is not likely."

"Likely or not," I rejoined sharply, "Mrs. Norman says he's been seized with a fainting fit, and I give the lady credit for knowing what she's talking about."

"*Eh bien*," he drummed nervously on the cushions of the automobile seat, "perhaps Jules deGrandin really is a fool. After all, it is not impossible."

"It certainly isn't," I agreed fervently to myself as I set the car in motion.

Young Eckhart had recovered consciousness when we arrived,

but looked like a man just emerging from a lingering fever. Attempts to get a statement from him met with no response, for he replied slowly, almost incoherently, and seemed to have no idea concerning the cause of his illness.

Mrs. Norman was little more specific. "My son Ferdinand found him lying on the floor of his bath with the shower going and the window wide open, just before dinner," she explained. "He was totally unconscious, and remained so till just a few minutes ago."

"Ha, is it so?" de Grandin murmured half heedlessly, as he made a rapid inspection of the patient.

"Friend Trowbridge," he called me to the window, "what do you make of these objective symptoms: a soft, frequent pulse, a fluttering heart, suffused eyes, a hot, dry skin and a flushed, hectic face?"

"Sounds like an arterial hemorrhage," I answered promptly, "but there's been no trace of blood on the boy's floor, nor any evidence of a stain on his clothing. Sure you've checked the signs over?"

"Absolutely," he replied with a vigorous double nod. Then to the young man: "Now, *mon enfant*, we shall inspect you, if you please."

Quickly he examined the boy's face, scalp, throat, wrists and calves, finding no evidence of even a pinprick, let alone a wound capable of causing syncope.

"*Mon Dieu*, this is strange," he muttered; "of a surety, it has the queerness of the devil! Perhaps the bleeding is internal, but—ah, *regard-ez vous*, Friend Trowbridge!"

He had turned down the collar of the youngster's pajama jacket, more in idle routine than in hope of discovering anything tangible, but the livid spot to which he pointed seemed the key to our mystery's outer door. Against the smooth, white flesh of the young man's left breast there showed a red, angry patch, such as might have resulted from a vacuum cup being held some time against the skin, and in the center of the discoloration was a double row of tiny punctures scarcely larger than needle-pricks,

arranged in horizontal divergent arcs, like a pair of parentheses laid sidewise.

"You see?" he asked simply, as though the queer, blood-infused spot explained everything.

"But he couldn't have bled much through that," I protested. "Why, the man seems almost drained dry, and these wounds wouldn't have yielded more than a cubic centimeter of blood, at most."

He nodded gravely. "Blood is not entirely colloidal, my friend," he responded. "It will penetrate the tissues to some extent, especially if sufficient force is applied."

"But it would have required a powerful suction —" I replied, when his rejoinder cut me short:

"Ha, you have said it, my friend. Suction — that is the word!"

"But what could have sucked a man's blood like this?" I was in a near-stupor of mystification.

"What, indeed?" he replied gravely. "That is for us to find out. Meantime, we are here as physicians. A quarter-grain morphine injection is indicated here, I think. You will administer the dose; I have no license in America."

When I returned from my round of afternoon calls next day I found de Grandin seated on my front steps in close conference with Indian John.

Indian John was a town character of doubtful lineage who performed odd jobs of snow shoveling, furnace tending and grass cutting, according to season, and interspersed his manual labors with brief incursions into the mercantile field when he peddled fresh vegetables from door to door. He also peddled neighborhood gossip and retailed local lore to all who would listen, his claim to being a hundred years old giving him the standing of an indisputable authority in all matters antedating living memory.

"*Pardieu*, but you have told me much, *mon vieux*," de Grandin declared as I came up the porch steps. He handed the old rascal a handful of silver and rose to accompany me into the house.

"Friend Trowbridge," he accused as we finished dinner that night, "you had not told me that this town grew up on the site of an early Swedish settlement."

"Never knew you wanted to know," I defended with a grin.

"You know the ancient Swedish church, perhaps," he persisted.

"Yes, that's old Christ Church," I answered. "It's down in the east end of town; don't suppose it has a hundred communicants today. Our population has made some big changes, both in complexion and creed, since the days when the Dutch and Swedes fought for possession of New Jersey."

"You will drive me to that church, right away, at once, immediately?" he demanded eagerly.

"I guess so," I agreed "What's the matter now; Indian John been telling you a lot of fairy-tales?"

"Perhaps," he replied, regarding me with one of his steady, unwinking stares. "Not all fairy-tales are pleasant, you know. Do you recall those of *Chaperon Rouge* — how do you say it, Red Riding Hood? — and Bluebeard?"

"Huh!" I scoffed; "they're both as true as any of John's stories, I'll bet."

"Undoubtlessly," he agreed with a quick nod. "The story of Bluebeard, for instance, is unfortunately a very true tale indeed. But come, let us hasten; I would see that church tonight, if I may."

Christ Church, the old Swedish place of worship, was a combined demonstration of how firmly adzhewn pine and walnut can resist the ravages of time and how nearly three hundred years of weather can demolish any structure erected by man. Its rough-painted walls and short, firm-based spire shone ghostly and pallid in the early spring moonlight, and the cluster of broken and weather-worn tombstones which staggered up from its unkempt burying ground were like soiled white chicks seeking shelter from a soiled white hen.

Dismounting from a car at the wicket gate of the churchyard, we made our way over the level graves, I in a maze of

wonderment, de Grandin with an eagerness almost childish. Occasionally he flashed the beam from his electric torch on some monument of an early settler, bent to decipher the worn inscription, then turned away with a sigh of disappointment.

I paused to light a cigar, but dropped my half-burned match in astonishment as my companion gave vent to a cry of excited pleasure. "*Triomphe!*" he exclaimed delightedly. "Come and behold, Friend Trowbridge. Thus far your lying friend, the Indian man, has told the truth. *Regardez!*"

He was standing beside an old, weather-gnawed tombstone, once marble, perhaps, but appearing more like brown sandstone under the ray of his flashlight. Across its upper end was deeply cut the one word:

SARAH

while below the name appeared a verse of half-obliterated doggerel:

Let nonne difturb her deathleffe fleepe
Abote ye tombe wilde garlick keepe
For if fhee wake much woe will boaft
Prayfe Faither, Sonne & Holie Goaft.

"Did you bring me out here to study the orthographical eccentricities of the early settlers?" I demanded in disgust.

"Ah bah!" he returned. "Let us consult the *ecclesiastique*. He, perhaps, will ask no fool's questions."

"No, you'll do that," I answered tartly as we knocked at the rectory door.

"Pardon, *Monsieur*," de Grandin apologized as the white-haired old minister appeared in answer to our summons, "we do not wish to disturb you thus, but there is a matter of great import on which we would consult you. I would that you tell us what you can, if anything, concerning a certain grave in your churchyard. A grave marked 'Sarah,' if you please."

"Why" — the elderly cleric was plainly taken aback — "I don't

think there is anything I can tell you about it, sir. There is some mention in the early parish records, I believe, of a woman believed to have been a murderess being buried in that grave, but it seems the poor creature was more sinned against than sinning. Several children in the neighborhood died mysteriously — some epidemic the ignorant physicians failed to understand, no doubt — and Sarah, whatever the poor woman's surname may have been, was accused of killing them by witchcraft. At any rate, one of the bereft mothers took vengeance into her own hands, and strangled poor Sarah with a noose of well-rope. The witchcraft belief must have been quite prevalent, too, for there is some nonsense verse on the tombstone concerning her 'deathless sleep' and an allusion to her waking from it; also some mention of wild garlic being planted about her."

He laughed somewhat ruefully. "I wish they hadn't said that," he added, "for, do you know, there are garlic shoots growing about that grave to this very day. Old Christian, our sexton, declares that he can't get rid of it, no matter how much he grubs it up. It spreads to the surrounding lawn, too," he added sadly.

"*Cordieu!*" de Grandin gasped. "This is of the importance, sir!"

The old man smiled gently at the little Frenchman's impetuosity.

"It's an odd thing," he commented, "there was another gentleman asking about that same tomb a few weeks ago; a—pardon the expression—a foreigner."

"So?" de Grandin's little, waxed mustache twitched like the whiskers of a nervous tom-cat. "A foreigner, do you say? A tall, rawboned, fleshless living skeleton of a man with a scar on his face and a white streak in his hair?"

"I wouldn't be quite so severe in my description," the other answered with a smile. "He certainly was a thin gentleman, and I believe he had a scar on his face, too, though I can't be certain of that, he was so very wrinkled. No, his hair was entirely white, there was no white streak in it, sir. In fact, I should have said he was very advanced in age, judging from his hair and face and the

manner in which he walked. He seemed very weak and feeble. It was really quite pitiable."

"*Sacre nom d'un fromage vert!*" de Grandin almost snarled. "Pitiable, do you say, *Monsieur*? *Pardieu*, it is damnable, nothing less!"

He bowed to the clergyman and turned to me. "Come, Friend Trowbridge, come away," he cried. "We must go to Madame Norman's at once, right away, immediately."

"What's behind all this mystery?" I demanded as we left the parsonage door.

He elevated his slender shoulders in an eloquent shrug. "I only wish I knew," he replied. "Someone is working the devil's business, of that I am sure; but what the game is, or what the next move will be, only the good God can tell, my friend."

I turned the car through Tunlaw Street to effect a short-cut, and as we drove past an Italian green grocer's, de Grandin seized my arm. "Stop a moment, Friend Trowbridge," he asked, "I would make a purchase at this shop.

"We desire some fresh garlic," he informed the proprietor as we entered the little store, "a considerable amount, if you have it."

The Italian spread his hands in a deprecating gesture. "We have it not, *Signor*," he declared. "It was only yesterday morning that we sold our entire supply." His little black eyes snapped happily at the memory of an unexpected bargain.

"Eh, what is this?" de Grandin demanded. "Do you say you sold your supply? How is that?"

"I know not," the other replied. "Yesterday morning a rich gentleman came to my shop in an automobile, and called me from my store. He desired all the garlic I had in stock—at my own price, *Signor*, and at once. I was to deliver it to his address in Rupleysville the same day."

"Ah?" de Grandin's face assumed the expression of a cross-word fiend as he begins to see the solution of his puzzle. "And this liberal purchaser, what did he look like?"

The Italian showed his white, even teeth in a wide grin. "It was funny," he confessed. "He did not look like one of our people,

nor like one who would eat much garlic. He was old, very old and thin, with a much-wrinkled face and white hair, he—"

"*Nom d'un chat!*" the Frenchman cried, then burst into a flood of torrential Italian.

The shopkeeper listened at first with suspicion, then incredulity, finally in abject terror. "No, no," he exclaimed. "No, *Signor; santissima Madonna*, you do make the joke!"

"Do I so?" de Grandin replied. "Wait and see, foolish one."

"*Santo Dio* forbid!" The other crossed himself piously, then bent his thumb across his palm, circling it with his second and third fingers and extending the fore and little fingers in the form of a pair of horns.

The Frenchman turned toward the waiting car with a grunt of inarticulate disgust.

"What now?" I asked as we got under way once more; "what did that man make the sign of the evil eye for, de Grandin?"

"Later, my friend; I will tell you later," he answered. "You would but laugh if I told you what I suspect. He is of the Latin blood, and can appreciate my fears." Nor would he utter another word till we reached the Norman house.

"Dr. Trowbridge—Dr. de Grandin!" Mrs. Norman met us in the hall; "you must have heard my prayers; I've been phoning your office for the last hour, and they said you were out and couldn't be reached."

"What's up?" I asked.

"It's Mr. Eckhart again. He's been seized with another fainting fit. He seemed so well this afternoon, and I sent a big dinner up to him at 8 o'clock, but when the maid went in, she found him unconscious, and she declares she saw something in his room—"

"Ha?" de Grandin interrupted. "Where is she, this servant? I would speak with her."

"Wait a moment," Mrs. Norman answered; "I'll send for her."

The girl, an ungainly young Southern negress, came into the front hall, sullen dissatisfaction written large upon her black face.

"Now, then," de Grandin bent his steady, unwinking gaze on her, "what is it you say about seeing someone in the young Monsieur Eckhart's room, *hein?*"

"Ah did see sumpin', too," the girl replied stubbornly. "Ah don' care who says Ah didn't see nothin', Ah says Ah did. Ah'd just toted a tray o' vittles up to Mistuh Eckhart's room, an' when Ah opened de do', dere wuz a woman—dere wuz a woman—yas, sar, a skinny, black-eyed white woman—a-bendin' ober 'um an'—an'—"

"And what, if you please?" de Grandin asked breathlessly.

"A-bitin' 'um!" the girl replied defiantly. "Ah don' car whut Mis' Norman says, she wuz a-bitin' 'um. Ah seen her. Ah knows whut she wuz. Ah done hyeah tell erbout dat ol' Sarah woman what come up out 'er grave wid a long rope erbout her neck and go 'round bitin' folks. Yas, sar; an' she wuz a-bitin' 'um, too. Ah seen her!"

"Nonsense," Mrs. Norman commented in an annoyed whisper over de Grandin's shoulder.

"*Grand Dieu*, is it so?" de Grandin explained, and turning abruptly, leaped up the stairs toward the sick man's room, two steps at a time.

"See, see, Friend Trowbridge," he ordered fiercely when I joined him at the patient's bedside. "Behold, it is the mark!" Turning back Eckhart's pajama collar, he displayed two incised horizontal arcs on the young man's flesh. There was no room for dispute, they were undoubtedly the marks of human teeth, and from the fresh wounds the blood was flowing freely.

As quickly as possible we staunched the flow and applied restoratives to the patient, both of us working in silence, for my brain was too much in a whirl to permit the formation of intelligent questions, while de Grandin remained dumb as an oyster.

"Now," he ordered as we completed our ministrations, "we must get back to that cemetery, Friend Trowbridge, and once there, we must do the thing which must be done!"

"What the devil's that?" I asked as we left the sickroom.

"*Non, non*, you shall see," he promised as we entered my car and drove down the street.

"Quick, the crank-handle," he demanded as we descended from the car at the cemetery gate, "it will make a serviceable

hammer." He was prying a hemlock paling from the graveyard fence as he spoke.

We crossed the unkempt cemetery lawn again and finally paused beside the tombstone of the unknown Sarah.

"Attend me, Friend Trowbridge," de Grandin commanded, "hold the searchlight, if you please." He pressed his pocket flash into my hand. "Now—" He knelt beside the grave, pointing the stick he had wrenched from the fence straight downward into the turf. With the crank of my motor he began hammering the wood into the earth.

Farther and farther the rough stake sank into the sod, de Grandin's blows falling faster and faster as the wood drove home. Finally, when there was less than six inches of the wicket projecting from the grave's top, he raised the iron high over his head and drove downward with all his might.

The short hair at the back of my neck suddenly started upward, and little thrills of horripilation chased each other up my spine as the wood sank suddenly, as though driven from clay into sand, and a low hopeless moan, like the wailing of a frozen wind through an ice-cave, wafted up to us from the depths of the grave.

"Good God, what's that?" I asked, aghast.

For answer he leaned forward, seized the stake in both hands and drew suddenly up on it. At his second tug the wood came away. "See," he ordered curtly, flashing the pocket lamp on the tip of the stave. For the distance of a foot or so from its pointed end the wood was stained a deep, dull red. It was wet with blood.

"And now forever," he hissed between his teeth, driving the wood into the grave once more, and sinking it a full foot below the surface of the grass by thrusting the crank-handle into the earth. "Come, Friend Trowbridge, we have done a good work this night. I doubt not the young Eckhart will soon recover from his maiady."

His assumption was justified. Eckhart's condition improved steadily. Within a week, save for a slight pallor, he was, to all appearances, as well as ever.

The pressure of the usual early crop of influenza and pneumonia kept me busily on my rounds, and I gradually gave up hope of getting any information from de Grandin, for a shrug of the shoulders was all the answer he vouchsafed to my questions. I relegated Eckhart's inexplicable hemorrhages and the bloodstained stake to the limbo of never-to-be-solved mysteries. But—

2

"Good mornin', gentlemen," Detective Sergeant Costello greeted as he followed Nora, my household factorum, into the breakfast room, "it's sorry I am to be disturbin' your meal, but there's a little case puzzlin' th' department that I'd like to talk over with Dr. de Grandin, if you don't mind."

He looked expectantly at the little Frenchman as he finished speaking, his lips parted to launch upon a detailed description of the case.

"*Parbleu*," de Grandin laughed, "it is fortunate for me that I have completed my breakfast, *cher Sergent*, for a riddle of crime detection is to me like a red rag to a bullfrog—I must needs snap at it, whether I have been fed or no. Speak on, my friend, I beseech you; I am like Balaam's ass, all ears."

The big Irishman seated himself on the extreme edge of one of my Heppelwhite chairs and gazed deprecatingly at the derby he held firmly between his knees. "It's like this," he began. "'tis one o' them mysterious disappearance cases, gentlemen an' whilst I'm thinkin' th' young lady knows exactly where she's at an' why she's there, I hate to tell her folks about it.

"All th' high-hat folks ain't like you two gentlemen, askin' your pardon, sors— they mostly seems to think that a harness bull's unyform is sumpin' like a livery—like a shofur's or a footman's or sumpin', an' that a plainclothes man is just a sort o' inferior servant. They don't give th' police credit for no brains, y'see, an' when one o' their darters gits giddy an' runs off th' reservation, if we tells 'em th' gurril's run away of her own free will an' accord they say we're a lot o' lazy, good-fer-nothin' bums

who are tryin' to dodge our laygitimate jooties by castin' mud on th' young l. lies' char-ac-ters, d'ye see? So, when this Miss Esther Norman disappears in broad daylight—leastwise, in th' twilight—o' th' day before her dance, we suspects right away that th' gurrl's gone her own ways into th' best o' intentions, y'see; but we dasn't tell her fólks as much, or they'll be hollerin' to th' commissioner fer to git a bran' new set o' detectives down to headquarters, so they will.

"Now, mind ye, I'm not sayin' th' young lady *mightn't* o' been kidnaped, y'understand, gentlemen, but I do be sayin' 'tis most unlikely. I've been on th' force, man an' boy, in unyform and in plain clothes fer th' last twenty-five years, an' th' number of laygitimate kidnapi'n's o' young women over ten years of age I've seen can be counted on th' little finger o' me left hand, an' I ain't got none there, at all, at all."

He held the member up for our inspection, revealing the fact that the little finger had been amputated close to the knuckle.

De Grandin, elbows on the table, pointed chin cupped in his hands, was puffing furiously at a vile-smelling French cigarette, alternately sucking down great drafts of its acrid smoke and expelling clouds of fumes in double jets from his narrow, aristocratic nostrils.

"What is it you say?" he demanded, removing the cigarette from his lips. "Is it the so lovely *Mademoiselle* Esther, daughter of that kind Madame Tuscarora Avenue Norman, who is missing?"

"Yes, sor," Costello answered, "'tis th' same young lady's flew the coop, accordin' to my way o' thinkin'."

"*Mordieu!*" the Frenchman gave the ends of his blond mustache a savage twist; "you intrigue me, my friend. Say on, how did it happen, and when?"

"'Twas about midnight last night th' alarm came into headquarters," the detective replied. "Accordin' to th' facts as we have 'em, th' young lady went downtown in th' Norman car to do some errands. We've checked her movements up, an' here they are."

He drew a black-leather memorandum book from his pocket and consulted it.

"At 2:45 or thereabouts, she left th' house, arrivin' at th' Ocean Trust Company at 2:55, five minutes before th' instytootion closed for th' day. She drew out three hundred an' thirty dollars an' sixty-five cents, an' left th' bank, goin' to Madame Gerard's, where she tried on a party dress for th' dance which was bein' given at her house that night.

"She left Madame Gerard's at 4:02, leavin' orders for th' dress to be delivered to her house immeejately, an' dismissed her sho-fur at th' corner o' Dean an' Tunlaw Streets, sayin' she was goin' to deliver some vegytables an' what-not to a pore family she an' some o' her friends was keepin' till their oldman gits let out o' jail—'twas meself an' Clancey, me buddy, that put him there when we caught him red-handed in a job o' housebreakin', too.

"Well, to return to th' young lady, she stopped at Pete Bacigalupo's store in Tunlaw Street an' bought a basket o' fruit an' canned things, at 4:30, an' —" He clamped his long-suffering derby between his knees and spread his hands emptily before us.

"Yes, 'and' —?" de Grandin prompted, dropping the glowing end of his cigarette into his coffee cup.

"An' that's all," responded the Irishman. "She just walked off, an' no one ain't seen her since, sor."

"But—*cordieu!*—such things do not occur, my friend," de Grandin protested. "Somewhere you have overlooked a factor in this puzzle. You say no one saw her later? Have you nothing whatever to add to the tale?"

"Well"—the detective grinned at him—"there are one or two little incidents, but they ain't of any importance in th' case, as far as I can see. Just as she left Pete's store an old gink tried to 'make' her, but she give him th' air, an' he went off an' didn't bother her no more.

"I'd a' liked to seen th' old boy, at that. Day before yesterday there was an old felly hangin' 'round by the silk mills, annoyin' th' gurrls as they come off from work. Clancey, me mate, saw 'im an' started to take 'im up, an' darned if th' old rummy wasn't strong as a bull. D'ye know, he broke clean away from Clancey

an' darn near broke his arm, in th' bargain? Belike 'twas th' same man accosted Miss Norman outside Pete's store."

"Ah?" de Grandin's slender, white fingers began beating a devil's tattoo on the tablecloth. "And who was it saw this old man annoy the lady *hein?*"

Costello grinned widely, "'Twas Pete Bacigalupo himself, sor," he answered. "Pete swore he recognized th' old geezer as havin' come to his store a month or so ago in an autymobile an bought up all his entire stock o' garlic. Huh! Th' fool dago said he wouldn't a gone after th' felly' for a hundred dollars—said he had th' pink-eye, or th' evil eye, or some such thing. Them wops sure do burn me up!"

"*Dieu et le diable!*" de Grandin leaped up, oversetting his chair in his mad haste. "And we sit here like three *poissons d'avril*—like poor fish—while he works his devilish will on her! Quick, Sergeant! Quick, Friend Trowbridge! Your hats, your coats; the motor! Oh, make haste, my friends, fly, fly, I implore you; even now it may be too late!"

As though all the fiends of pandemonium were at his heels he raced from the breakfast room, up the stairs, three steps at a stride, and down the upper hall toward his bedroom. Nor did he cease his shouted demands for haste throughout his wild flight.

"Cuckoo?" The sergeant tapped his forehead significantly.

I shook my head as I hastened to the hall for my driving clothes. "No," I answered, shrugging into my topcoat, "he's got a reason for everything he does; but you and I can't always see it, Sergeant."

"You said a mouthful that time, doc," he agreed, pulling his hat down over his ears. "He's the darndest, craziest Frog I ever seen, but, at that, he's got more sense than nine men out o'ten."

"To Rupleysville, Friend Trowbridge," de Grandin shouted as he leaped into the seat beside me. "Make haste, I do implore you. Oh, Jules de Grandin, your grandfather was an imbecile and all your ancestors were idiots, but you are the greatest zany in the family. Why, oh, why, do you require a sunstroke before you can see the light, foolish one?"

I swung the machine down the pike at highest legal speed, but

the little Frenchman kept urging greater haste. "*Sang de Dieu, sang de Saint Denis, sang du diable!*" he wailed despairingly. "Can you not make this abominable car go faster, Friend Trowbridge? Oh, ah, *helas*, if we are too late! I shall hate myself, I shall loathe myself—*pardieu*, I shall become a Carmelite friar and eat fish and abstain from swearing!"

We took scarcely twenty minutes to cover the ten-mile stretch to the aggregation of tumbledown houses which was Rupleysville, but my companion was almost frothing at the mouth when I drew up before the local apology for a hotel.

"Tell me, *Monsieur*," de Grandin cried as he thrust the hostelry's door open with his foot and brandished his slender ebony cane before the astonished proprietor's eyes, "tell me of *un vieillard*—an old, old man with snow-white hair and an evil face, who has lately come to this so detestable place. I would know where to find him, right away, immediately, at once!"

"Say," the boniface demanded truculently, "where d'ye git that stuff? Who are you to be askin'—"

"That'll do"—Costello shouldered his way past de Grandin and displayed his badge—"you answer this gentleman's questions, an' answer 'em quick an' accurate, or I'll run you in, see?"

The innkeeper's defiant attitude melted before the detective's show of authority like frost before the sunrise. "Guess you must mean Mr. Zerny," he replied sullenly. "He come here about a month ago an' rented the Hazeltown house, down th' road about a mile. Comes up to town for provisions every day or two, and stops in here sometimes for a—" He halted abruptly, his face suffused with a dull flush.

"Yeah?" Costello replied. "Go on an' say it; we all know what he stops here for. Now listen, buddy" — he stabbed the air two inches before the man's face with a blunt forefinger— "I don't know whether this here Zerny felly's got a tellyphone or not, but if he has, you just lay off tellin' 'im we're comin'; git me? If anyone's tipped him off when we git to his place I'm comin' back here and plaster more padlocks on this place o' yours than Sousa's got medals on his blouse. Savvy?"

"Come away, *Sergent*; come away, Friend Trowbridge," de Grandin besought almost tearfully. "Bandy not words with the *cancre*; we have work to do!"

Down the road we raced in the direction indicated by the hotelkeeper, till the picket fence and broken shutters of the Hazelton house showed among a rank copse of second-growth pines at the bend of the highway.

The shrewd wind of early spring was moaning and soughing among the black boughs of the pine trees as we ran toward the house, and though it was bright with sunshine on the road, there was chill and shadow about us as we climbed the sagging steps of the old building's ruined piazza and paused breathlessly before the paintless front door.

"Shall I knock?" Costello asked dubiously, involuntarily sinking his voice to a whisper.

"But no," de Grandin answered in a low voice, "what we have to do here must be done quietly, my friends."

He leaned forward and tried the doorknob with a light, tentative touch. The door gave under his hand, swinging inward on protesting hinges, and we tiptoed into a dark, dust-carpeted hall. A shaft of sunlight, slanting downward from a chink in one of the window shutters, showed innumerable dust-motes flying lazily in the air, and laid a bright oval of light against the warped floor-boards.

"Huh, empty as a pork-butcher's in Jerusalem," Costello commented disgustedly, looking about the unfurnished rooms, but de Grandin seized him by the elbow with one hand while he pointed toward the floor with the ferrule of his slender ebony walking stick.

"Empty, perhaps," he conceded in a low, vibrant whisper, "but not recently, *mon ami*." Where the sunbeam splashed on the uneven floor there showed distinctly the mark of a booted foot, two marks—a trail of them leading toward the rear of the house.

"Right y'are," the detective agreed. "Someone's left his track here, an' no mistake."

"Ha!" de Grandin bent forward till it seemed the tip of his

highbridged nose would impinge on the tracks. "Gentlemen," he rose and pointed forward into the gloom with a dramatic flourish of his cane, "they are here! Let us go!"

Through the gloomy hall we followed the trail by the aid of Costello's flashlight, stepping carefully to avoid creaking boards as much as possible. At length the marks stopped abruptly in the center of what had formerly been the kitchen. A disturbance in the dust told where the walker had doubled on his tracks in a short circle, and a ringbolt in the floor gave notice that we stood above a trap-door of some sort.

"Careful, Friend Costello," de Grandin warned, "have ready your flashlight when I fling back the trap. Ready? *Un—deux—trois!*"

He bent, seized the rusty ringbolt and heaved the trap-door back so violently that it flew back with a thundering crash on the floor beyond.

The cavern had originally been a cellar for the storage of food, it seemed, and was brick-walled and earth-floored, without window or ventilation opening of any sort. A dank, musty odor assaulted our nostrils as we leaned forward, but further impressions were blotted out by the sight directly beneath us.

White as a figurine of carven alabaster, the slender, bare body of a girl lay in sharp reverse silhouette against the darkness of the cavern floor, her ankles crossed and firmly lashed to a stake in the earth, one hand doubled behind her back in the position of a wrestler's hammerlock grip, and made firm to a peg in the floor, while the left arm was extended straight outward, its wrist pinioned to another stake. Her luxuriant fair hair had been knotted together at the ends, then staked to the ground, so that her head was drawn far back, exposing her rounded throat to its fullest extent, and on the earth beneath her left breast and beside her throat stood two porcelain bowls.

Crouched over her was the relic of a man, an old, old, hideously wrinkled witch-husband, with matted white hair and beard. In one hand he held a long, gleaming, double-edged dirk while with the other he caressed the girl's smooth throat with gloating strokes of his skeleton fingers.

"Howly Mither!" Costello's County Galway brogue broke through his American accent at the horrid sight below us.

"My God!" I exclaimed, all the breath in my lungs suddenly seeming to freeze in my throat.

"*Bonjour, Monsieur le Vampire!*" Jules de Grandin greeted nonchalantly, leaping to the earth beside the pinioned girl and waving his walking stick airily. "By the horns of the devil, but you have led us a merry chase, Baron Lajos Czuezron of Transylvania!"

The crouching creature emitted a bellow of fury and leaped toward de Grandin, brandishing his knife.

The Frenchman gave ground with a quick, catlike leap and grasped his slender cane in both hands near the top. Next instant he had ripped the lower part of the stick away, displaying a fine, three-edged blade set in the cane's handle, and swung his point toward the frothing-mouthed thing which mouthed and gibbered like a beast at bay. "A-ah?" he cried with a mocking, upward-tilting accent. "You did not expect this, eh, Friend Blood-drinker? I give you the party-of-surprize, *n'est-ce-pas?* The centuries have been long, *mon vieux*; but the reckoning has come at last. Say, now will you die by the steel, or by starvation?"

The aged monster fairly champed his gleaming teeth in fury. His eyes seemed larger, rounder, to gleam like the eyes of a dog in the firelight, as he launched himself toward the little Frenchman.

"*Sa-ha!*" the Frenchman sank backward on one foot, then straightened suddenly forward, stiffening his sword-arm and plunging his point directly into the charging beastman's distended, red mouth. A scream of mingled rage and pain filled the cavern with deafening shrillness, and the monster half turned, as though on an invisible pivot, clawed with horrid impotence at the wire-fine blade of de Grandin's rapier, then sank slowly to the earth, his death cry stilled to a sickening gurgle as his throat filled with blood.

"*Fini!*" de Grandin commented laconically, drawing out his handkerchief and wiping his blade with meticulous care, then cutting the unconscious girl's bonds with his pocket-knife. "Drop

down your overcoat, Friend Trowbridge," he added, "that we may cover the poor child's nudity until we can piece out a wardrobe for her.

"Now, then"—as he raised her to meet the hands Costello and I extended into the pit—"if we clothe her in the motor rug, your jacket, *Sergeant*, Friend Trowbridge's topcoat and my shoes, she will be safe from the chill. *Parbleu*, I have seen women refugees from the *Boche* who could not boast so complete a toilette!"

With Esther Norman, hastily clothed in her patchwork assortment of garments, wedged in the front seat between de Grandin and me, we began our triumphant journey home.

"An' would ye mind tellin' me how ye knew where to look for th' young lady, Dr. de Grandin, sor?" Detective Sergeant Costello asked respectfully, leaning forward from the rear seat of the car.

"Wait, wait, my friend," de Grandin replied with a smile. "When our duties are all performed I shall tell you such a tale as shall make your two eyes to pop outward like a snail's. First, however, you must go with us to restore this *pauvre enfant* to her mother's arms; then to the headquarters to report the death of that *sale bete*. Friend Trowbridge will stay with the young lady for so long as he deems necessary, and I shall remain with him to help. Then, this evening—with your consent, Friend Trowbridge—you will dine with us, *Sergeant*, and I shall tell you all, everything, in total. Death of my life, what a tale it is! *Parbleu*, but you shall call me a liar many times before it is finished!"

Jules De Grandin placed his demitasse on the tabouret and refilled his liqueur glass. "My friends," he began, turning his quick, elfish smile first on Costello, then on me, "I have promised you a remarkable tale. Very well, then, to begin."

He flicked a wholly imaginary fleck of dust from his dinner jacket sleeve and crossed his slender, womanishly small feet on the hearth rug.

"Do you recall, Friend Trowbridge, how we went, you and I, to the tea given by the good Madame Norman? Yes? Perhaps,

then, you will recall how at the entrance of the ballroom I stopped with a look of astonishment on my face. Very good. At that moment I saw that which made me disbelieve the evidence of my own two eyes. As the gentleman we later met as Count Czerny danced past a mirror on the wall I beheld—*parbleu!* what do you suppose?—the reflection only of his dancing partner! It was as if the man had been non-existent, and the young lady had danced past the mirror by herself.

“Now, such a thing was not likely, I admit; you, *Sergent*, and you, too, Friend Trowbridge, will say it was not possible; but such is not the case. In certain circumstances it is possible for that which we see with our eyes to cast no shadow in a mirror. Let that point wait a moment; we have other evidence to consider first.

“When the young man told us of the count’s prowess in battle, of his incomparable ferocity, I began to believe that which I had at first disbelieved, and when he told us the count was a Hungarian, I began to believe more than ever.

“I met the count, as you will remember, and I took his hand in mine. *Parbleu*, it was like a hand with no palm—it had hairs on both sides of it! You, too, Friend Trowbridge, remarked on that phenomenon.

“While I talked with him I managed to maneuver him before a mirror. *Morbleu*, the man was as if he had not been; I could see my own face smiling at me where I knew I should have seen the reflection of his shoulder!

“Now, attend me: The *Surete General*—what you call the Police Headquarters—of Paris is not like your English and American bureaus. All facts, no matter however seemingly absurd, which come to that office are carefully noted down for future reference. Among other histories I have read in the archives of that office was that of one Baron Lajos Czuczron of Transylvania, whose actions had once been watched by our secret agents.

“This man was rich and favored beyond the common run of Hungarian petty nobles, but he was far from beloved by his peasantry. He was known as cruel, wicked and implacable, and

no one could be found who had ever one kind word to say for him.

"Half the countryside suspected him of being a *loup-garou*, or werewolf, the others credited a local legend that a woman of his family had once in the olden days taken a demon to husband and that he was the offspring of that unholy union. According to the story, the progeny of this wicked woman lived like an ordinary man for one hundred years, then died on the stroke of the century *unless his vitality was renewed by drinking the blood of a slaughtered virgin!*

"Absurd? Possibly. An English intelligence office would have said 'bally nonsense' if one of its agents had sent in such a report. An American bureau would have labeled the report as being the sauce-of-the-apple; but consider this fact: in six hundred years there was no single record of a Baron Czuczron having died. Barons grew old—old to the point of death—but always there came along a new baron, a man in the prime of life, not a youth, to take the old baron's place, nor could any say when the old baron had died or where his body had been laid.

"Now, I had been told that a man under a curse—the werewolf, the vampire, or any other thing in man's shape who lives more than his allotted time by virtue of wickedness—can not cast a shadow in a mirror; also that those accursed ones have hair in the palms of their hands. *Eh bien*, with this foreknowledge, I engaged this man who called himself Count Czerny in conversation concerning Transylvania. Parbleu, the fellow denied all knowledge of the country. He denied it with more force than was necessary. 'You are a liar, *Monsieur le Comte*,' I tell him, but I say it to myself. Even yet, however, I do not think what I think later.

"Then came the case of the young Eckhart. He loses blood, he can not say how or why, but Friend Trowbridge and I find a queer mark on his body. I think to me, 'if, perhaps, a vampire—a member of that accursed tribe who leave their graves by night and suck the blood of the living—were here, that would account for this young man's condition. But where would such a being come from? It is not likely.'

"Then I meet that old man, the one you call Indian John. He tells me much of the history of this town in the early days, and he tells me something more. He tells of a man, an old, old man, who has paid him much money to go to a certain grave—the grave of a reputed witch—in the old cemetery and dig from about it a growth of wild garlic. Garlic, I know is a plant intolerable to the vampire. He can not abide it. If it is planted on his grave he can not pass it.

"I ask myself, 'Who would want such a thing to be, and why?' But I have no answer; only, I know, if a vampire have been confined to that grave by planted garlic, then liberated when that garlic is taken away, it would account for the young Eckhart's strange sickness.

"*Tiens*, Friend Trowbridge and I visit that grave, and on its tombstone we read a verse which makes me believe the tenant of that grave may be a vampire. We interview the good minister of the church and learn that another man, an old, old man, have also inquired about that strange grave. 'Who have done this?' I ask me; but even yet I have no definite answer to my question.

"As we rush to the Norman house to see young Eckhart I stop at an Italian green grocer's and ask for fresh garlic, for I think perhaps we can use it to protect the young Eckhart if it really is a vampire which is troubling him. *Parbleu*, some man, an old, old man, have what you Americans call 'cornered' the available supply of garlic. '*Cordieu*,' I tell me, 'this old man, he constantly crosses our trail! Also he is a very great nuisance.'

"The Italian tell me the garlic was sent to a house in Rupleysville, so I have an idea where this interfering old rascal may abide. But at that moment I have greater need to see our friend Eckhart than to ask further questions of the Italian. Before I go, however, I tell that shopkeeper that his garlic customer has the evil eye. *Parbleu, Monsieur* Garlic-Buyer you will have no more dealings with that Italian! He knows what he knows.

"When we arrive at the Norman house we find young Eckhart in great trouble, and a black serving maid tells of a strange-looking woman who bit him. Also, we find toothmarks

on his breast. 'The vampire woman, Sarah, is, in very truth, at large,' I tell me, and so I hasten to the cemetery to make her fast to her grave with a wooden stake, for, once he is staked down, the vampire can no longer roam. He is finished.

"Friend Trowbridge will testify he saw blood on the stake driven into a grave dug nearly three hundred years ago. Is it not so, *mon ami*?"

I nodded assent, and he took up his narrative:

"Why this old man should wish to liberate the vampire-woman, I know not; certain it is, one of that grisly guild, or one closely associated with it, as this 'Count Czerny' undoubtedly was, can tell when another of the company is in the vicinity, and I doubt not he did this deed for pure malice and deviltry.

"However that may be, Friend Trowbridge tells me he have seen the count, and that he seems to have aged greatly. The man who visited the clergyman and the man who bought the garlic was also much older than the count as we knew him. 'Ah ha, he is coming to the end of his century,' I tell me; 'now look out for devilment, Jules de Grandin. Certainly, it is sure to come.'

"And then, my Sergent, come you with your tale of *Mademoiselle* Norman's disappearance, and I, too, think perhaps she has run away from home voluntarily, of her own free will, until you say the Italian shopkeeper recognized the old man who accosted her as one who has the evil eye. Now what old man, save the one who bought the garlic and who lives at Rupleysville, would that Italian accuse of the evil eye? *Pardieu*, has he not already told you the same man once bought his garlic? But yes. The case is complete.

"The girl has disappeared, an old, old man has accosted her; an old, old man who was so strong he could overcome a policeman; the count is nearing his century mark when he must die like other men unless he can secure the blood of a virgin to revivify him. I am more than certain that the count and baron are one and the same and that they both dwell at Rupleysville. Voila, we go to Rupleysville, and we arrive there not one little minute too soon. *N'est-ce-pas, mes amis?*"

"Sure," Costello agreed, rising and holding out his hand in farewell, "you've got th' goods, doc. No mistake about it."

To me, as I helped him with his coat in the hall, the detective confided, "An' he only had one shot o' lick'er all evenin'! Gosh, doc, if one drink could fix me up like that I wouldn't care how much prohibition we had!"

The Cases Of Jules de Grandin

A Chronological Listing

(part two: 1933-1951)

All of the de Grandin-Trowbridge stories originally appeared in *WEIRD TALES*; some were reprinted there, and a second date refers to this. SMS refers to reprint in *STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES*, while M&M refers to the collection of ten stories published by Mycroft & Moran, under the title of *The Phantom Fighter*. (Sauk City, Wisconsin 53583; \$5.00).

The illustrator for each story is given in parenthesis, full name the first time, last name only thereafter. When two illustrators are given, or one is listed twice for a story, the first mention indicates a cover illustration.

Part one of this chronology appeared in the Summer 1969 (No. 13) issue of *STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES*.

51. *A Gamble in Souls*, January 1933 (Jayem Wilcox).

52. *The Thing in the Fog*, March 1933 (Margaret Brundage, Wilcox).

53. *The Hand of Glory*, July 1933 (Brundage, Wilcox).

54. *The Chosen of Vishnu*, August 1933 (Brundage, Wilcox).

55. *Malay Horror*, September 1933 (Wilcox).

56. *The Mansion of Unholy Magic*, October 1933 (Wilcox); SMS No. 1, Summer 1966.

57. *Red Gauntlets of Czerni*, December 1933 (Wilcox).

58. *The Red Knife of Hassan*, January 1934 (Brundage, Wilcox).

59. *The Jest of Warburg Tantavul*, September 1934 (H.R. Hammond).

(M&M)

60. *Hands of the Dead*, January 1935 (Hugh Rankin).

61. *The Black Orchid*, August 1935 (Vincent Napoli).

62. *The Dead-Alive Mummy*, October 1935 (Napoli).

63. *A Rival from the Grave*, January 1936 (Brundage, Napoli).

64. *Witch-House*, November 1936 (Brundage, Virgil Finlay).

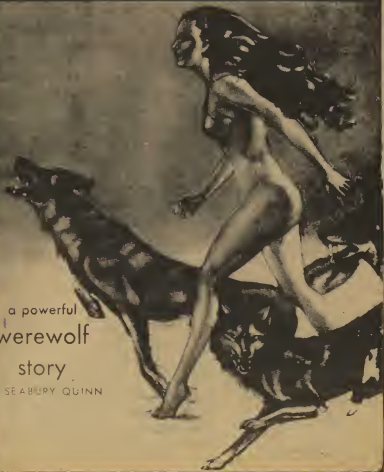
65. *Children of the Bat*, January 1937 (Brundage, Finlay).

66. *Satan's Palimpsest*, September 1937 (Brundage, Finlay).

Weird Tales

a powerful
werewolf
story

BY SEABURY QUINN



Weird Tales



SEPTEMBER

Weird Tales

Satan's Palimpsest

an eerie tale of sinister doings

By SEABURY QUINN

CLARK ASHTON SMITH
EDMOND HAMILTON
H. P. LOVECRAFT



weird Tales 25c

FROZEN BEAUTY

an thrilling story
of a great surgeon's
wild experiment

by
SEABURY QUINN

Illustrated by
Edward Sull
M. G. Brown
Henry Kuntz



67. *Pledged to the Dead*, October 1937 (Finlay).

68. *Living Buddness*, November 1937 (Brundage, Finlay).

69. *Flames of Vengeance*, December 1937 (Finlay).

70. *Frozen Beauty*, February 1938 (Finlay, Finlay).

71. *Incense of Abomination*, March 1938 (Brundage, Finlay).

72. *Suicide Chapel*, June 1938 (Brundage, Finlay).

73. *The Venomed Breath of Vengeance*, August 1938 (no illustration).

74. *Black Moon*, October 1938 (Finlay).

75. *The Poltergeist of Swan Upping*, February 1939 (Finlay).

76. *The House Where Time Stood Still*, March 1939 (Finlay).

77. *Mansions in the Sky* June-July 1939 (unidentified: probably Finlay.)

78. *The House of the Three Corpses*, August 1939 (no illustration.)

79. *Stoneman's Memorial*, May 1942 (Hannes Bok).

80. *Death's Bookkeeper*, July 1944 (A.R. Tilburne, Tilburne).

81. *The Green God's Ring*, January 1945 (Tilburne).

82. *Lords of the Ghostlands*, March 1945 (Tilburne, Tilburne.)

83. *Kurban*, January 1946 (Tilburne, Boris Dolgov).

84. *The Man in Crescent Terrace*, March 1946, (Tilburne).

85. *Three in Chains*, May 1946 (Dolgov).

86. *Catspaws*, July 1946 (Tilburne).

87. *Lotte*, September 1946 (Tilburne).

88. *Eyes in the Dark*, November 1946 (Dolgov).

89. *Claire de Lune*, November 1947 (Dolgov).

90. *Vampire Kith and Kin* May 1949 (Napoli).

91. *Conscience Maketh Cowards* November, 1949 (Lee Brown Coye).

92. *The Body Snatchers*, November 1950 (Napoli).

93. *The Ring of Bustet*, September 1951 (Fred Humiston).

Notes on Illustrations

Margaret Brundage's nudes made their debut with her cover for No. 52. We learned in later years that she used her daughters for models, and they were on the young side at the time — which explains some curious effects, I think. Nudes also graced her covers for No's. 53, 58, 64, 65, 66 and 71. There was always more eroticism than weirdness, though the artist did try; I would say she came closest to a real combination of the two elements in No's 53, 58, 66 and 71.

H. R. Hammond appeared only once, and that was enough. Vincent Napoli has a reasonably good likeness of de Grandin in No. 60 (Jules at the age of 45), but not of Trowbridge — except for the perceptive Mr. Finlay, nearly everyone visualized Trowbridge as younger than de Grandin. Finlay himself has a series of generally satisfactory pictures; his nudes are more believable than Brundage's, and in at least one instance — his cover for No. 70 — more

The four covers we have reproduced in this issue are for the March 1933, January 1937, September 1937, and February 1938 issues of WEIRD TALES, which contained stories number 52, 58, 66, and 70 of the series.

erotic. But aside from the little portraits, we never see his version of the partners.

Boris Dolgov's pictures are a pleasure to look at, and Lee Brown Coye's are wonderfully gruesome — a shame he was not called upon to do more in the series — though neither are right for these stories. Of the lot, Dolgov, the best truly weird artist WT had since Rankin — and, in some ways outRanking Hugh —

projects a splendid weird feeling for Nos. 85 and 88. (I do not demean Finlay, nor take back a single word of praise for him; his style however is graphic, even in his most fantastic horrors.)

The rest are not worth talking about; Bok did some fine material, but Jules de Grandin wasn't for him; Tilburne's drawing for No. 84 has an effectiveness about it, that is all. RAWL

Coming Next Issue

"You do not understand," Taine said, "You send for me and tell me your problem, I say that I will take the case and you ask me what I mean? Simply that I will find out what happened to your brother. You pay me when I make my final report. Do you intend going to Arabia?"

"Yes, There will be three of us, Dr. Hartwig, a linguist; Dr. William Parker, a physician, and myself. We leave London in two weeks.

"Two Kings and a Jack," commented Taine, "Now, if you could only add an ace or two, you would have a fair poker hand. Of course a straight or royal flush would be better because you can never tell what your opponent has. I will report when I have finished the case."

"Then you are not going with us?"

"I wouldn't go with you for all the wealth of London," was the quiet reply. "It would be too dangerous. In my lifetime I have been in many tight places but I always got out alive because I was by myself. I suppose you three men are brave enough, but you might become excited at the wrong time. I am too valuable a person to be the victim of an accident. You need not advance any expense money. I always travel with funds. You and your friends go ahead with your plans. I will see you later and then I will explain your brother's disappearance."

But could Taine of San Francisco solve the Riddle of

THE TEMPLE OF DEATH

by David H. Keller, M.D.

The Cauldron

My thanks, first of all, to Tommy A. Land of Kenosha, Wisconsin, who, upon reading through the Summer issue of *STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES*, and noting that I had been unable to locate a copy of *The Bride of Fu Manchu*, promptly sent me one, thus completing my set. At this typing (August 19), I've just finished *The Mask of Fu Manchu*, and expect, tomorrow morning, to start reading *The Bride of Fu Manchu*, which, at my rate of a few chapters a day, should take me a few weeks.

I may have something to say—well, certainly I shall—about Fu Manchu in my running discussion of mystery and detective series, but not soon, as I want to go through all thirteen of the novels first. I had read the first four previously, and find them quite enjoyable on re-reading, but aside from a few installments of *The Trail of Fu Manchu* that I came across in *COLLIERS* magazine many years ago, have read none of the others. For fanciers of Sax Rohmer, those old *COLLIERS* serializations are worth obtaining for the wonderful artwork of John Richard Flanagan (I forgot now whether he actually illustrated the short-lived magazine *WU FANG*, or whether some other artist came up with a most excellent imitation of JRF's style), who captured the feeling of Fu Manchu and of such independent novels as *The Day the World Ended*, *The Bat Flies Low*,

and (possibly) *Yuan Hee See Laughs* in a way no other artist I have ever seen has been able to approach.

Apologies are due to our new artist, Richard Schmand, who was erroneously identified as "Robert" in both the July issue of *MAGAZINE OF HORROR* and the Summer *STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES*.

Since writing the essay on Poe's three pioneering Dupin Stories, I have been steered by Francis M. Nevins, Jr., to John Walsh's Edgar-winning study, *Poe the Detective*, which was published by Rutgers University Press in 1968. For the avid detective fan and Poe-lover, this short but fascinating volume examines the case of Mary Cecilia Rogers from the standpoint of the same material that was available to Edgar Allan Poe—the newspaper accounts that appeared at the time, 1842—and examines Poe's personal circumstances at the time that his *Marie Roget* was written. I learned from this that my dating of the original magazine appearance, as stated in the Spring 1969 SMS was incorrect. The final installment did not appear in the January 1843, but in the February 1843 issue of *THE LADIES COMPANION*. You might think this was a trifling error—after all, magazines sometimes skipped or combined issues even in those days—but it may be a very important one. There was a January 1843 issue, but the final installment of Poe's story did not appear

in it; it was held over to the February issue. And this fact plays an important part in the answer Mr. Walsh gives to the question which led him to do the research that led to his book: Did Edgar Allan Poe actually solve the Mary Cecilia Rogers case in his short story, *The Mystery of Marie Roget*, as he claimed to have done. The book sells for \$7.50, but is very well produced, fascinating pictures and maps, etc., and the real buff will find it worth the price, whether he agrees with the author's conclusion or not. Personally, I think Walsh has done a very fine job, and certainly earned the distinction his Edgar indicates.

P. J. Andrews, who liked the Lupoff article and the editorial best in our last issue, writes: "Abandon all hope of accurately dating the Philo Vance stories. *The Canary Murder Case* (Scribners 1927), which is very clearly the second venture Vance makes with Markham into homicide, is based on the actual murder of Dot King in 1923. But there are ten more to go—not nine, as you noted. Now even if Markham's term of office started in 1923, that would make a total of twelve unusual cases in four years, an average of three a year. Possible, perhaps—but I wonder if the next ten are kept strictly within the confines of 1923-1926. Was Gracie Allen that well known in 1926? Are there not references to bars (rather than speakeasies) in some of the later cases? This is not a rhetorical question—I don't remember; but it occurred to me that someone who has the books could check out to see if there are not little things like that which indicate that the action had to be happening later than 1926, or even 1933, when Prohibition ended. And don't forget that *The Benson Murder Case* was written after Markham retired and Vance went off to Italy, so I just don't see how it could have been written later than 1925. And I'll bet that if

someone were to check the month and day dates of *all* the cases, he'd come up with impossibilities, just as you did with the opening of the Benson affair."

If I can lay my hands on the other ten novels—and you're right; I forgot about *The Winter Murder Case*, published posthumously, which I never saw—I'll not only enjoy re-reading them, but scrutinizing incidental items with care, as well as checking the month-and-day dates given for the openings.

My own suspicion is that Wright started out with the intention of writing two or three Philo Vance novels, never suspecting that he'd be turning out one nearly every year for the rest of his life. Obviously, as things turned out, he couldn't stay within the limitations he'd laid down for himself in the introduction to *The Benson Murder Case*.

George Gati writes from California: "The current issue (Vol. 3 No. 1) is one of the most satisfying issues I have ever received, and I have been a subscriber since the inception of the magazine.

"It is difficult to rate the stories in that I found them all to be excellent! *The Veil of Tanit* is 'first' only because of the wistful quality that is evident throughout this story. Upon reflection, this attractive feature is evident, also, in *Ancient Fires*.

"I find that I cannot 'rate' the current contents in that the implication would be that the remainder were of lower quality, and they are not! This is a jackpot issue and may there be many more."

H. A. Faulkner seconds the motion from Richmond, Virginia: "All stories were the best in a single issue in a long time. They were more chillingly weird as opposed to startlingly mysterious. Van Gogh rather than Picasso. *Where There's Smoke* was excellent whimsy. Wish one

The Cauldron

such short-short could be included in each issue. It was last but first in its class."

C. J. Probert, who put the two short-shorts in a tie for first place, writes from Toronto, Canada: "Rating on pure effectiveness, the nod would have to go to *The Hansom Cab* or *Where There's Smoke*—they were also the best written. Of the longer stories, only de Rezske's *The Veil of Tanit* had any staying power. Marquat sounds as if he might have been a hero for a series (ARGOSY?), but the writing was sloppy. Everil Worrel's *The Gray Killer* and *Ancient Fires* both combined elements too familiar to me to wake me up, particularly the latter. And *The Scar!* It had Campbell's trade-marks—Brichester, the brooding, malignant atmosphere, but the ending was ambiguous for this reader. Liked the cover and editorial."

While neither of the two short-short stories in our Summer issue seems likely to win in the final reckoning, the authors have good reason to be pleased, as both not only received some high votes, but a number of other readers had special praise for *The Hansom Cab* and *Where There's Smoke*, even while they scored the other stories higher.

Mike Ashley writes from Kent, England, to say almost the opposite from Mr. Probert: "The best thing about this issue was that both *The Gray Killer* and *The Veil of Tanit* were extremely well written. Both started very well and sustained interest throughout. They lacked only in the ending. *The Gray Killer* had a rather implausible explanation after such a good series of events, and seemed almost a *deus ex machina*. But the writing still maintained a high standard and this did not dull the effect. *The Veil of Tanit* had a very weak ending. I was hoping Smith was going to

come to a very grisly ending, not just commit suicide, and this did weaken the story's impact, for until then I was totally enraptured in it.

Ancient Fires was one of the better de Grandin yarns without his lapsing into great foreign verbalisms. Once again the ending was predictable, especially with the all too sudden introduction of the girl. But it was a very good story nevertheless.

"Knowing Ramsey Campbell personally perhaps swayed me a little in my voting for the yarn, because I could imagine him reading the story out himself, and with his incredible voice the story couldn't help being a winner. But it was well-plotted and generally well-written, and that's about all I can say about it.

Whilst reading *The Hansom Cab* I was suddenly reminded of the sequence in the Walt Disney film *Darby O'Gill and the Little People*. Whilst a children's film, there was a startlingly realistic scene where a banshee arrives at a party to conduct O'Gill's daughter to the Dullahan, but Darby goes instead, and that scene with the horses galloping away and O'Gill trying to get out of the coach, and the wailing green banshee has always stuck in my mind (being about six when I first saw it!) All this brings me to say that the story was so like the scene in the film, yet nowhere near as exciting, resulted in my disliking the story as a copy. Perhaps had I not seen the film I would have enjoyed it, since it was well written, but merely as a copy of legend, and perhaps even inspired by that scene, I just couldn't appreciate it.

"Where There's Smoke was mediocre; an interesting twist to this very wornout plot, but not exceptional.

"Overall, however, a very good issue, particularly the de Rezske and Worrell pieces, worthy of anyone's attention."

Charles Hidley writes: "A brief note

Have You Missed Our Earlier Issues?

#1, Summer 1966: *Village of the Dead*, Edward D. Hoch; *House of the Hatchet*, Robert Bloch; *The Off-Season*, Gerald W. Page; *The Tell-Tale Heart*, Edgar Allan Poe; *The Lurking Fear*, H. P. Lovecraft; *The Awful Injustice*, S. B. H. Hurst; *Ferguson's Capsules*, August Derleth; *The Mansion of Unholy Magic*, Seabury Quinn.

#2, Fall 1968: *The House of Horror*, Seabury Quinn; *The Men in Black*, John Brunner; *The Strange Case of Pascal*, Roger Eugene Ulmer; *The Witch is Dead*, Edward D. Hoch; *Doctor Satan*, Paul Ernst; *The Secret of the City*, Terry Carr & Ted White; *The Street* (verse), Robert A. W. Lowndes; *The Scourge of B'Moth*, Bertam Russell.

#3, Winter 1966/67: *The Inn of Terror*, Gaston Leroux; *The Other*, Robert A. W. Lowndes; *The Door of Doom*, Hugh B. Cave; *A Matter of Breeding*, Ralph Hayes; *Esmerelda*, Rama Wells; *The Trial for Murder*, Charles Dickens & Charles Collins; *The Blood-Flower*, Seabury Quinn.

#4, Spring 1967: *The Tottenham Werewolf*, August Derleth; *The Secret of Lost Valley*, Robert E. Howard; *Medium for Justice*, Victor Rousseau; *Si Urag of the Tail*, Oscar Cook; *The Temptation of Harringay*, H. G. Wells; *The Tenants of Broussac*, Seabury Quinn.

Order From Page 128

to laud you once again for bringing a new name (to me) and a fine writer. What a pleasure it is to nominate J. Ramsey Campbell's *The Scar* for 'first' this summer. A natural follow-up to *Mrs. Kaye* and *After Sunset*. Seldom do I dash out and buy a volume on the strength of one yarn, but *The Inhabitant of the Lake* will soon be mine as, I hope, other of his tales will be, through your good efforts, amid the pages of both magazines.

"So very, very good to come across Everil Worrell, and since I've only read *The Canal*, can't you reprint some of the remaining sixteen? *The Gray Killer* was so agonizingly outre in its depiction of not only delirium but the day-to-day evil ambiance of 'normal' hospital existence. The off-beat writing style and the plot line were exemplary—until we get to 'the confession'. Too bad all the 30s stops had to be pulled out.

"*The Veil of Tanit* was no more than an adventure story and hardly worthy of standards you've already set. The cover was an abomination.

"What can I tell you about my reaction to the four old *WEIRD TALES* covers reproduced with your welcome—though incomplete—article? You really are too much, RAWL, and deserve my old Buck Rogers and Wilma Deering 8 x 10 for printing those oldies but oh-so-goodies. Why can't you use them as your cover illustrations? They'd do better on glossy stock and would be an invaluable service to fans and lovers of the macabre in artwork. The Paul's and Wesso's came out so well—isn't it feasible?

"*The Hansom Cab* had that tumultuous, nightmare brevity that makes even a semaphored plot a bit of a chiller. As to *Ancient Fires*, Quinn is always the meat course, reliable, filling and substantial—even when it's not Chateaubriand."

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It's too risky to attempt using old covers on our cover, even where the picture isn't hopelessly compromised with type (and more often than not, they were); putting those we've used inside on glossy paper would make what does come out a little sharper and cleaner, true, but as you can see, a lot just doesn't come out in the first place, with the type of photography we use. It is *possible* to get better pictures, but the expense would be prohibitive for us.

Tommy A. Land, also writes: "I would like to know something: When a particular issue goes out of print, why couldn't you just get more copies printed. I tried to get issues number 1, 3, and 4 of *MAGAZINE OF HORROR* from you and they were out of print. I'm sure other people have tried to get some of these also. It seems as if it would be worth it to you to have more copies printed. And how can you sell the old issues for the original price? It would seem as if you could sell them for much more, as some of the other companies do.

"Speaking of selling, do you know where a person can sell old magazines? I have a couple of boxes full of old copies of *WEIRD TALES* and there are some

duplicates I want to get rid of."

Mr. Land's address is 5011 22nd Avenue, Kenosha, Wisconsin 53140, if any reader wants to inquire as to what issues he has for sale and what he asks for them—and that is the only answer we can give to the question.

So far as making a second run of issues of *MAGAZINE OF HORROR* of which our supply has become exhausted, be assured that if this sort of thing were economically feasible, just about everybody would be doing it. The demand (and in this case, one positively must consider a reasonable *guaranteed* sale) for back issues simply is not great enough, even though several thousands are willing, ready, and eager to buy. No old issue today could be re-run at the original cost, and I am not thinking of just payments to authors, within the scale of what we are able to pay; that is the smallest part of it.

If you've noticed our back issue page, you will see that we have had to up the price of back issues, though not exorbitantly; so as things now stand, only current issues can be had at the cover price. An issue is considered "current" until the following one is on sale.

THE EDITOR'S PAGE

(Continued from Page 7)

Holmes' in that they consist of induction and deduction correlated with his sizeable foundation of study and experience; but unlike Holmes, he does not rely so much upon personal and minute investigations of walls, floors, ceilings, etc., for the most part. Not that he tries to solve all riddles from his armchair, like Nero Wolfe (who, as it happens, actually does go out much more frequently than one would suppose), but rather that his over-all approach differs from that of the great Sherlock. Holmes does not despise psychological considerations, but his first concern is for the physical evidence; it is from this that the question of "What sort of person does this crime require?" arises. Poirot does not despise physical evidence, but having been a noted policeman, he considers the police competent to do the legwork and supply most "clues" of this nature that keen observation of the scene does not disclose to him; it is the psychology of both the crime and the victim that engage him from the start.

Poirot rarely uses disguise in the way that Holmes, a master of the art, does. In the first place (he realizes that he is not very disguisable I am sure), his individual method hardly ever requires dressing up and trying to change his physical appearance. What he does disguise, to good effect quite frequently, is his own actual character; he is adept at appearing like the out-of-place foreigner, floundering around in a well-meaning fashion, or even making an attempt to be clever so as to justify his reputation. It doesn't always work well, but it pays off in a very good percentage of instances.

What his method boils down to is to put people at ease, despite the uneasy

situation, and get them to talk. He rarely intimidates or contradicts; on the contrary he appears sympathetic (which is true, more often than not, when we consider that most of the people he talks to are innocent of the crime under investigation) and has innumerable subtle psychological devices of feeding the talker more rope. Eventually he finds that someone has lied; and while his often repeated comment that he never again trusts a person in a case once he finds that that person has lied to him may not be 100% true, it is a cornerstone in his method. Of course, what the liar (and it is not only the culprit) is trying to conceal may or may not be the crucial fact needed to nail the case tightly, but it is nearly always something of vital importance to the case.

There are thirty-one Poirot novels, and more short stories than I'm able to count wherein he appears. Hastings relates *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, and *Murder on the Links*; (1920 and 1923 respectively). Since it is the captain's attraction to pretty girls in these two cases that compound simple stupidity into what becomes hilarious imbecility at times, it is a relief that one of the girls he falls in love with in the second novel also falls for him, and they are married and off to Argentina when the second affair is concluded. He also relates the series of fourteen cases that make up *Poirot Investigates*, and which obviously took place before the second novel. And in the short story, *How Does Your Garden Grow?* (*The Regatta Mystery* — a short story collection, which includes five Poirot stories not included in the collection mentioned above), Poirot mentions, "How I miss my friend

Here Are The Complete Contents of More of Our Earlier Issues

#5, Summer 1967: *The Gods of East and West*, Seabury Quinn; *The Council & The House* (verse), Robert A. W. Lowndes; *Behind the Curtain*, Leslie Jones; *A Game of Chess*, Robert Barr (introduction by Sam Moskowitz); *The Man from Nowhere*, Edward D. Hoch; *The Darkness on Fifth Avenue*, Murray Leinster.

#6, Fall 1967: *My Lady of the Tunnel*, Arthur J. Burks; *The Glass Floor*, Stephen King; *Death from Within*, Sterling S. Cramer; *A Vision* (verse), Robert E. Howard; *Aim of for Perfection*, Beverly Haaf; *The Dark Castle*, Marion Brandon; *Dona Diabla*, Anna Hunger; *The Druid's Shadow*, Seabury Quinn.

Order From Page 128

COMING SOON

THE DEVIL'S ROSARY

by Seabury Quinn



THE STORM THAT HAD TO BE STOPPED

by Murray Leinster

Hastings. He had such an imagination. Such a romantic mind! It is true that he always imagined wrong — but that in itself was a guide."

Yes, Hastings had his uses. Unlike Dr. Watson, he had no specialized knowledge at all, and where Holmes could say to Watson, "You know my methods . . .", and be telling the truth — the joke being that Watson did not realize that, actually, he *did* know — Poirot could hardly say this to his imaginative friend. At least, however, Hastings is no fatuous worshipper of Poirot; he is fond of him, but just thinks him mistaken in many places, and often wonders if he has lost his grip.

At the end of *Murder on the Links*, Hastings has gone to Argentina with his wife, to handle her estate there, and Poirot has retired to raise vegetable marrows. Such is the situation at the beginning of Christie's most controversial novel, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. (I'm sure God has forgiven Dorothy L. Sayers for revealing the controversial gimmick in this novel, which revelation I read in the introduction to her otherwise excellent first *Omnibus of Crime* before I read the story itself; but only by divine help can I myself forgive her.) The only thing to be said here, then, for the sake of those who have not yet read the story, is that many re-readings have convinced me that the author *does* play fairly with the reader; and it is not the author's fault if the reader has particular preconceptions which keep him from adding matters up toward the only possible solution, given that the culprit is neither a spear carrier nor someone rung in suddenly to pull the author out of a corner.

Hastings returns in *The Big Four* (1927) which is quite unlike all the other Poirot stories; it's really a series of short stories joined together to make a novel, and is closer to the spirit of Fu Manchu than the genuine puzzle-detective tales

that otherwise feature our Belgian. I might add that Hastings is a trifle less idiotic here than before (at least, he is not distracted into romantic imbecility by every pretty female who shows up) and that it is worth having for one of the most delightful episodes in the entire series — the final one which involves Poirot's brother, Achille, and manages to parody both Sherlock Holmes and Agatha Christie herself.

From here on out, *The Mystery of the Blue Train* (1928) to *The Third Girl* (1966) most of the Poirot novels are related either from the author's viewpoint or that of one of the characters — the only two exceptions I can recall being Hastings return in *The ABC Murders* (1935), and *Poirot Loses A Client* (1937 — British title *Dumb Witness*). A few minor characters re-appear now and then; but contrary to the impression given by a recent film, Poirot never meets Miss Marple, who, along with other Christie characters, we'll take a look at next issue. One of the features lacking in the Ramsey book — and one really needed, alas — is a complete list of Christie characters who appear in more than one story, and a distribution of where you find them. My impression from memory is that, aside from Hastings, no one character serves as narrator for more than one Poirot story.

Recently acquiring and re-reading *Thirteen at Dinner*, we find not only that Hastings narrates this one, but Poirot explains to the ex-captain sincerely why he is such a valuable colleague. You may not realize it, he tells Hastings, but you often point the way. Hastings is pleased, and says that perhaps he has learned something from associating with Poirot on so many cases after all. Poirot shakes his head and says, no, you have learned nothing — and then continues that this is a good thing. One should not learn to be like other people, but to be one's own unique self. An imitation of Poirot would

Have You Missed Our Earlier Issues?

#7, Winter 1967/68: *The Bride of the Peacock*, E. Hoffmann Price; *Nice Old House*, Dona Tolson; *Those Who Seek*, August Derleth; *John Bartine's Watch*, Ambrose Bierce; *The Pet of Mrs. Lüth*, Robert Barbour Johnson; *The Man Who Chained the Lightning*, Paul Ernst.

#8, Spring 1968: *The White Lady of the Orphanage*, Seabury Quinn; *The Gray People*, John Campbell Haywood (introduction by Sam Moskowitz); *And Then No More...* Jay Tyler; *The Endocrine Monster*, R. Anthony; *The Return of the Sorcerer*, Clark Ashton Smith; *The Three from the Tomb*, Edmond Hamilton.

#9, Summer 1968: *The Black Mass*, Col. S. P. Meek; *The Last Archer*, Earl Peirce, Jr.; *The Sight of Roses*, Jay Tyler; *Webbed Hands*, Ferdinand Berthoud; *Acrophobia* (verse), L. Sprague de Camp; *Hollywood Horror*, Paul Ernst.

#10, Fall 1968: *The House of the Living Dead*, Harold Ward; *The Indoor Safari*, Max Nugor; *The House Party at Smoky Island*, L. M. Montgomery; *Settler's Wall*, Robert A. W. Lowndes; *The Island of Missing Ships*, Seabury Quinn.

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Have You Missed Our Earlier Issues?

#11, Winter 1968,69. *Wolf Hollow Bubbles*, David H. Keller, M. D.; *Mrs. Kaye*, Beverly Haaf, *The Haunter of the Ring*, Robert E. Howard; *The Vengeance of India*, Seabury Quinn; *After Sunset*, Phillip Hazelton; *The Ship of Silent Men*, Phillip M. Fisher; *The Whisperer* (verse), Robert A. W. Lowndes.

#12, Spring 1969: *The Woman with the Velvet Collar*, Gaston Leroux; *The Reaper's Image*, Stephen King; *Sirrush* (verse), L. Sprague de Camp; *Sword for a Sinner*, Edward D. Hoch; *Tiger*, Bassett Morgan; *The City of the Blind*, Murray Leinster.

#13, Summer 1969: *The Gray Killer*, Everil Worrell; *The Scar*, J. Ramsey Campbell; *Where There's Smoke*, Donna Gould Welk; *Ancient Fires*, Seabury Quinn; *The Cases of Jules de Grandin* (article: part one), Robert A. W. Lowndes; *The Hansom Cab*, Ken Porter; *The Veil of Tanit*, Eugene de Rezske.

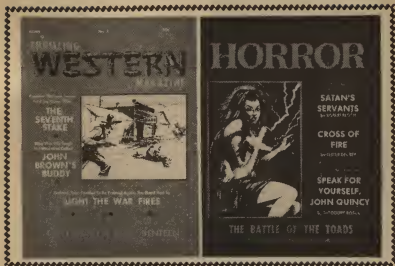
No. 14, Winter 1969: *The Dogs of Doctor Dwann*, Edmond Hamilton; *The Parasite*, Dorothy Norman Cooke; *The Outsider*, H. P. Lovecraft; *The Crawler* (verse), Robert W. Lowndes; *The White Domino*, Urann Thayer; *The Case of the Doctor Who Had No Business* (article), Richard Lupoff; *The Feline Phantom*, Gilbert Draper; *The Consuming Flame*, Paul Ernst.

be useless, but a "supreme Hastings" is invaluable.

Because, Poirot points out, Hastings is almost a perfect example of the so-called "normal man". And it is the "normal man" that the criminal seeks to deceive. Thus, in Hastings' mind, Poirot can see, as in a mirror, what the criminal wishes him to believe.

Hastings is somewhat disgruntled. So Poirot adds: "I have expressed myself badly . . . You have an insight into the criminal mind, which I myself lack. You show me what the criminal wishes me to believe. It is a great gift."

As with many others who created a fascinating detective character, Agatha Christie had no suspicion in 1915, when she wrote *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, of how many years she would be writing Poirot stories. So she tells us in the first novel that Poirot retired from the Belgian police force in 1904 (remember, this was before the time when a particular age meant automatic retirement). No matter how we figure it, he must be around sixty by 1915, when Hastings runs into him and persuades him to look in to the goings-on. The only thing to do is to age him gradually, so that he does get slightly older each decade, but not alarmingly so, although by the time of *The Clocks*, (1963) he does not get around quite so much. And he does, indeed, solve *The Clocks* virtually from his armchair, young Colin Lamb (an intelligent young investigator) plays Archie to Poirot's Nero Wolfe, as it were — except that Lamb, who feels that he can solve the crime and Poirot could not, teases him with an account of it. But this is by no means an imitation of Rex Stout; the final summing up does not take place amongst a gathering of all the surviving suspects, but amongst the members of the police involved. And we learn early in the novel that Poirot has been catching up on detective stories, and has come upon some unpublished



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manuscripts of a deceased popular author. His comments upon his fictitious colleagues add amusement, for he does not so much criticize their cases and methods as to make use of them. You will find the essence of Sherlock Holmes, Father Brown and John Dickson Carr noted here, among others.

Since I have read almost all of the near-sixty novels that Agatha Christie has had published, as well as most of the short stories, it is inevitable that somewhere along the line I got to the point where I could detect the author even when the tangle of clues and misdirections quite baffled me — as was usually the case. (I'm grateful for not being quite so ingenious a reader as Noel Carter, who can almost invariably beat any fictional detective to the solution.) But the gratifying thing about this is the fact that Christie manages on the whole to be so ingeniously deceptive, even in most of the instances where she has repeated a device or rung but a slight variation upon it, without being really unfair to the reader. Re-reading will show you that, by a certain point well in advance of the solution given, she has faithfully adhered to the rule that Willard Huntington Wright (S.S. Van Dine) laid down in his "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories": The truth should at all times be apparent, providing that the reader is clever enough to see it. "All times," of course, does not mean from the first chapter (although sometimes this actually is the case, as with Anthony Boucher's *Rocket to the Morgue* — but don't expect me to indicate to you *where* in the first chapter!) but rather a reasonable amount of wordage prior to the final revelation.

Poirot's secret of procedure, his true method, is stated in *The Clocks* (not for the first time, but I do not recall the other specific instances at the moment). It is not so much in questioning people but in conversing with them. "Because in

conversation, you do not get merely the answers to questions — in ordinary conversational prattle things slip out. People are on their guard when the subject may be dangerous to them, but the moment ordinary talk ensues, they relax, they succumb to the relief of speaking the truth, which is always very much easier than lying. And so they let slip one little fact which unbeknown to them makes all the difference.”

One of the most typical examples of the sort of misdirection of the reader, which we find not only in Poirot's cases but in others is one which Nigel Dennis refers to in his article on Agatha Christie that ran in *LIFE* magazine in 1956, and which Ramsey also uses in his book. Poirot asks the butler if the date has been taken off the calendar on the wall since the murder. The butler goes over to the calendar and looks at it, then answers the question. How many readers suspected for a moment that the date on the calendar, or whether the date actually had been taken off is *not* what Poirot is trying to ascertain? But what Poirot learns from this episode, and what the really astute reader learned as well is crucial. Think for a moment before looking at the footnote below.*

While Poirot has appeared in three films, the reports are that none of them have been satisfactory, and Mrs. Christie herself has been far from pleased with what the movie-makers have done to her stories — on the contrary, she has gained satisfaction from the reviews, which have been mostly scathing. Worse still have been the films of Poirot novels where Miss Marple has been substituted for Poirot. Margaret Rutherford's performances have been highly praised in

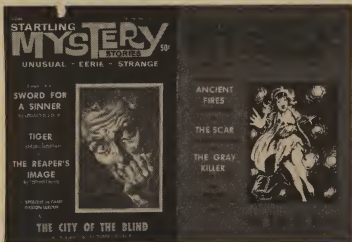
* Congratulate yourself if you deduced that the butler was too near-sighted to see clearly across the room.

these pictures — not surprising! — but that is all.

The first version of *And Then There Were None (Ten Little Indians)* was not too bad, although a faithful adherence to the book in all, rather than in most, matters would have been better. The one film of which Mrs. Christie approves was the one based upon her short story, *The Witness for the Prosecution*, very well worked out and acted by Charles Laughton, Elsa Lanchester, Marlene Dietrich, and (surprisingly, to me) Tyrone Power. I doubt if many viewers who had not read the short story unraveled the solution to this ingenious double mystery.

There is, of course, as Ramsey points out, a fair amount of sheer detective-mystery-story type flummery in the Poirot tales. In order to make our great detective human, he has to be in danger — if not physical danger, and Poirot rarely is — in danger of making an utter fool of himself, of being totally taken in by the culprit to the extent that it is too late to save the next victim. So, even as does the great Sherlock Holmes, Poirot at times suddenly stops short, accuses himself of utter idiocy and says to Hastings, or whoever else, make haste! — and off they fly just in time to save whoever it is. And, if I mistake not, sometimes, even as with Holmes, it is too late!

All of the novels mentioned above are either still in print or reasonably findable in second hand stores, and all in paperback. Whether any further Poirot tales will appear while Mrs. Christie is still with us I cannot say; but she did write the true “final” last during World War Two, to be published posthumously. Which puts me and all others who love her (including Earl Stanley Gardner, John Dickson Carr, and Ellery Queen) in a truly awful position: we want her with us but we also want to read that story while we're still here! RAWL



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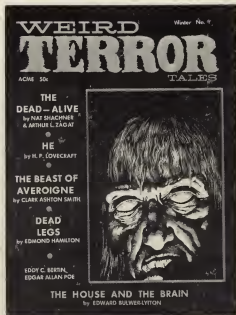
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